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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	08/29 'Dangerous' heat reignite West fire season?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/29/western-california-heatwave-fires-forecast/
GIST	<p>A quiet late summer for western wildfires may be about to come to an abrupt end.</p> <p>Weather models are indicating that a potentially extreme and prolonged heat wave will build over western states this week and into the Labor Day weekend. The National Weather Service in Sacramento is warning of a “very dangerous heat risk” with high temperatures well above 100 degrees.</p>

Although a supercharged monsoon brought a welcome reprieve from the smoke-filled summer skies and destructive wildfires of the past two years, not every region has seen soaking rain.

Much of California is entering autumn parched and flammable after a months-long dry season, as are parts of the Pacific Northwest into Nevada, Idaho and Montana. And the heat wave is arriving just as windy weather patterns begin to increase in the West.

“Because of the last two-plus years of drought, the fuel is ready to go and it’s just a matter of things lining up in terms of weather and ignitions,” said Alex Tardy, a warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service in San Diego, referring to Southern California.

The upcoming heat could not only cause an uptick in fire activity but also prime the landscape for autumn’s inevitable fierce winds.

“I would be surprised if we don’t get a relatively active fire season in September and October,” he said.

Farther north, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, D, declared a state of emergency Sunday “due to the imminent threat of wildfire.”

“With wildfire behavior increasing across the state, and with the threat of fire not likely to recede in the near future, it is imperative that we act now to prevent further loss — of life, property, business, and our natural resources,” Brown said.

A hot and potentially windy September

An intense and possibly record-breaking heat wave is on the horizon as a heat dome begins to build in the western U.S. this week. Excessive heat watches are already up for the southern half of California as far north as the San Joaquin Valley.

“We will very likely be in the midst of a full-fledged and potentially dangerous heat wave by midweek” wrote the National Weather Service in Los Angeles in a forecast discussion on Sunday.

Longer range forecasts indicate that much of the month will be warmer than normal.

Although the West hasn’t seen the repeated, headline-making heat waves that it did in 2020 and 2021, the last half of summer has still been unusually hot. Sacramento, for example, could break its record for the number of days in a year exceeding 100 degrees. Boise has already hit that milestone — topping 100 degrees 22 times this year — the most since the city’s records began in 1875. It’s forecast to add to that later this week when temperatures climb again.

September — typically a transitional month into autumn weather — is likely to bring more wind as the jet stream begins to dip farther south.

Dry cold fronts will push their way into the interior West and bring more organized westerly winds. Stronger “offshore” winds, which blow from the east, become more likely in California as fall progresses.

This past weekend, a passing cold front drove several thousand acres of growth on Oregon’s Rum Creek Fire, now over 10,000 acres. It also fanned the flames of the Cherry Gulch Fire in northern Nevada, which ballooned from zero to 15,000 acres in less than a day.

“These types of patterns tend to increase as we approach fall,” said Gina McGuire, a fire meteorologist with the Great Basin Coordination Center in Salt Lake City, who noted that dried grasses in northern Nevada into Idaho could fuel rapid fire spread during windy conditions.

There has also been abundant lightning in Idaho in the past few weeks, and holdover fires could still emerge.

“That’s a big concern, especially in our higher-elevation timber areas,” McGuire said. “That’s something that we’re definitely watching, not only with wind but also this week when we get higher temperatures.”

A quiet late summer, aided by monsoon moisture

In California, roughly 200,000 acres have burned so far this year — far less than the 1.5 million acres that had been scorched by this time last year and well under the 5-year average of 1.1 million acres, according to data from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The state has yet to record a 100,000-acre “megafire” this year, which has become almost routine in an era of drought and heat waves intensified by climate change.

“We haven’t had a lot of large, active fires at the same time, so our resources are ready to go,” said Robert Foxworthy, public information officer for Cal Fire. “But that potential is there.”

In addition to monsoon rain in the mountains and deserts, Tardy said, high humidity from monsoon and ocean influences has helped to suppress wildfires in Southern California.

Those benefits could be erased by extreme or prolonged heat, as well as dry autumn winds. California could see its first offshore winds in September, which tend to intensify through the fall and have driven the state’s most destructive fires.

“We typically shouldn’t expect July and August to be the biggest part of the season in Southern California,” Tardy said. “Our time for the bigger fires is coming up.”

While California hasn’t seen a particularly bad fire season so far, the U.S. has still had an active fire year. The National Interagency Fire Center reports 47,918 fires have burned more than 6 million acres so far, which is “well above” the 10-year average. Notably, before the monsoon rains arrived, New Mexico saw its two largest fires on record in the late spring and early summer.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Why Dutch soldiers Indiana military camp?
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/shootings-indiana-indianapolis-9d29fff4388255a560ca0f37b1a0de62
GIST	<p>INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Before three Dutch soldiers were shot, one fatally, in downtown Indianapolis, they were training in a southern Indiana military camp where international soldiers enter highly specialized urban combat simulations they might not be able to get in their own country.</p> <p>Simmie Poetsema, 26, was identified Monday as the soldier who died of his injuries from the shooting Saturday outside a Hampton Inn where the men were staying. The two other soldiers have injuries that are not expected to be life-threatening, according to officials.</p> <p>But police did not release additional information Monday about the circumstances of the shooting. No arrests have been announced.</p> <p>Before the shooting, which police said they believe came after a disturbance, the men’s business was about an hour to the southeast — at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center.</p> <p>WHY TRAIN IN INDIANA?</p> <p>Foreign soldiers often go to United States military facilities that replicate the “unpredictable realism” of battlefield situations within an environment that a soldier would encounter.</p>

At Muscatatuck — where the three Dutch Commando Corps members involved in the shooting were training — “everything in the city and surrounding property, including the people, is ‘in play,’” [its website says](#).

It’s a 1,000-acre (405-hectare) complex that trumpets hyper-focused training across land, air, water, technology and space.

Mark Cancian, a senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a retired Marine colonel, said Muscatatuck is “essentially a small city” for combat training. U.S. allies with troops from countries without the capacity for such facilities can learn in an environment that replicates the one they could fight in, he said.

“Europeans have things like that,” he said, but U.S. facilities are “more elaborate, in part because we have more money, and probably because we have more space, and larger forces.”

WHAT EXACTLY IS AT MUSCATATUCK?

The Muscatatuck complex had been a state-operated center for people with developmental disabilities since the 1920s, with more than 2,000 residents at one point before it was closed by the state. The Indiana National Guard then took over the site in 2005.

Military officials saw the campus of more than 60 buildings, nine miles of roads and more than a mile of tunnels — in a rural setting isolated from nearby communities — as an ideal place to replicate an urban territory for military training, including chemical or biological attacks.

“Our primary intent is to simulate real-world, urban scenarios through real and virtual training for first responders involved in counterterrorism operations,” then-Indiana Guard Adjutant General Martin Umbarger said in announcing the creation of the Muscatatuck center in 2004.

The Indiana National Guard said in a statement that the center is used for training by the Department of Defense “as well as other allies.” A spokesman did not respond to an interview request.

Those materials detail a training environment that mimics a city — with a five-story hospital, an oil refinery, a coal-fired steam plant, among many other features — as well as bits of infrastructure that might be found in a war zone, such as downed aircraft, searchable “rubble buildings,” a caved-in parking garage and a collapsed rail trestle.

WHY WERE THE SOLDIERS AWAY FROM THE BASE?

The Muscatatuck center is part of a larger installation called Atterbury-Muscatatuck that covers 36,000 acres, including some lodging options. It’s not clear whether the Dutch soldiers had been staying on the installation during any of their training.

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HEADLINE	08/30 Blacks, Hispanics face more monkeypox
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2022/08/30/monkeypox-disparity-black-hispanic-people-more-cases-fewer-vaccines/7897707001/
GIST	<p>Black and Hispanic people are disproportionately contracting monkeypox virus – but fewer are getting the vaccine, according to early data.</p> <p>About 17,400 cases of the virus have been identified across the nation since May. Black people make up about a third of cases, compared to their 12% share of the overall population, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. Similarly, Hispanic or Latino people make up about 32% of cases, despite comprising 19% of the population, according to the data as of Aug. 14.</p> <p>During a Friday briefing, White House officials reported Black people only received 10% of shots against monkeypox, Hispanic people received 22% and white people received about 47%.</p>

Health disparity experts were not surprised by the data. Just like COVID-19 vaccine outreach, they said, efforts to target information and vaccinations must be grassroots, culturally sensitive and individualized.

“You can superimpose COVID, and the data would be very similar, unfortunately,” said Dr. Jonathan Appelbaum, a professor at Florida State University’s College of Medicine. “It’s just a microcosm of the health inequity in this country.”

Groups have been calling for help. Earlier this month, the Human Rights Campaign issued a [statement](#) reporting the racial disparities and imploring equitable response.

A Kaiser Family Foundation report said only four states – Colorado, Georgia, New Jersey and North Carolina – and Washington, D.C. are reporting [monkeypox vaccination by race and ethnicity](#). The CDC says its vaccination data comes from 18 states and one city, and only about half of states reported race and ethnicity for cases.

In New Jersey, Black people make up a quarter of the state's monkeypox cases and just 14% of vaccine recipients, according to the KFF [analysis](#). Hispanic people account for 40% of cases but a quarter of vaccinations.

Experts say more complete data is essential to understanding who needs treatment and where to focus efforts to reduce harm and cultivate trust.

Anyone can contract the disease. The current outbreak has been primarily among men who have sex with men. While the data is limited and can change, experts say it raises concerns about inequities in vaccine access, stigmatization and barriers faced by the marginalized groups.

Dr. Maya Green, a physician and chief medical officer at Howard Brown Health in Chicago, said Black communities like hers already struggle with health care access disparities.

“We can’t be surprised. We know this is historically what happens,” she said, pointing to COVID-19 and other diseases. “Our system has had super trouble moving from equity talks into action.”

Black LGBTQ people and other LGBTQ people of color grapple with additional layers of stigma. Some may not have been open about their lifestyles and after contracting the virus may "stay at home and wait for it to go away in shame," she said.

Appelbaum is a former medical director of the Fenway Community Health Center, run by the Boston-based Fenway Institute, which specializes in health and well-being of LGBTQ people and people with HIV. He said gay people of color struggle with specific barriers.

“Being a man who has sex with men, a man in the Black population, and even in the Hispanic population is, in many ways, much more stigmatizing than in the white population,” Appelbaum said.

The institute released a [guide](#) to communities, and said public health responses to the monkeypox outbreak “should not be allowed to exacerbate homophobia and racism and the scapegoating of gay and bisexual men and African immigrants.”

According to a University of California, Los Angeles, William Institute public policy [report](#), Black LGBT adults suffer health disparities and abuse. Roughly 79% reported facing verbal insults and abuse, and 60% reported being threatened with violence.

A Center for American Progress [survey](#) also reported 36% of Hispanic LGTBQ people reported discrimination and 20% said they avoided necessary services to steer clear of such experiences. A third reported negative or discriminatory treatment in the medical setting, compared to 17% of their white LGBTQ counterparts.

	<p>Dr. Paulina Rebolledo, a physician and infectious disease professor at Emory University School of Medicine, said prioritizing help and information to those most at risk is essential, but so is careful public health messaging to the general public to destigmatize the outbreak. She said communications need to emphasize that the disease can spread to anyone, regardless of sexual orientation. It simply spreads through close, prolonged contact with an infected person's sores, scabs and bodily fluids.</p> <p>"What affects one person or one group really affects us all," she said. "We need to be very careful and very intentional in making it clear that viruses do not discriminate."</p> <p>It's a critical time for public officials to stem spread, target efforts and correct stigma so people get help without fears of being stereotyped, Rebolledo added.</p> <p>"We're in this very important (moment) where we can use this opportunity to reach populations that have been marginalized," she said. "This is certainly a very timely and very important window that we don't want it to close before we really have the opportunity to act."</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 Iraq cleric tells loyalists to leave streets
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-religion-iran-iraq-baghdad-0ed4c3378b0257091a7b1d70b9e3fb35
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD (AP) — An influential Iraqi cleric called on his supporters to withdraw Tuesday from the capital's government quarter, where they have traded heavy fire with security forces in a serious escalation of a monthslong political crisis gripping the nation.</p> <p>In a televised speech, Muqtada al-Sadr gave his supporters an hour to leave — and minutes later some could be seen abandoning their positions on live television. Iraq's military announced an end to a curfew, further raising hopes that there might be a halt to the street violence.</p> <p>The unrest began Monday, when al-Sadr announced he would resign from politics and his supporters stormed the Green Zone, once the stronghold of the U.S. military that's now home to Iraqi government offices and foreign embassies. At least 30 people have been killed, officials said.</p> <p>"This is not a revolution," al-Sadr said in a televised address, which followed pleas for restraint and peace from several Iraqi officials and the United Nations.</p> <p>Iraq's government has been deadlocked since al-Sadr's party won the largest share of seats in October parliamentary elections but not enough to secure a majority government — unleashing months of infighting between different Shiite factions. Al-Sadr refused to negotiate with his Iran-backed Shiite rivals, and his withdrawal Monday catapulted Iraq into political uncertainty.</p> <p>Iran closed its borders to Iraq on Tuesday — a sign of Tehran's concern that the chaos could spread, though even before al-Sadr's order, streets beyond the capital's government quarter largely remained calm. The country's vital oil continued to flow, with global benchmark Brent crude trading slightly down.</p> <p>Earlier Tuesday, supporters of al-Sadr could be seen on live television firing both machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades into the heavily-fortified area through a section of pulled-down concrete walls. Security forces armed with machine guns inside the zone sporadically returned fire.</p> <p>Some bystanders filmed the gunfight with their mobile phones, though most hid behind still-standing segments of wall, wincing when rounds cracked nearby. As al-Sadr's forces fired, a line of armored tanks stood on the other side of the barriers that surround the Green Zone, though they did not use their heavy guns.</p>

At least one wounded man from al-Sadr's forces was taken away in a three-wheel rickshaw, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry visible in the background. Heavy black smoke at one point rose over the area, visible from kilometers (miles) away.

At least 30 people have been killed and over 400 wounded, two Iraqi medical officials said. The toll included both al-Sadr loyalists killed in protests the day before and clashes overnight. Those figures are expected to rise, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to release the information to journalists.

Members of Iraq's majority Shiite Muslim population were oppressed when Saddam Hussein ruled the country for decades. The 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam, a Sunni, reversed the political order. Just under two-thirds of Iraq is Shiite, with a third Sunni.

Now, the Shiites are fighting among themselves after the Americans largely withdrew from the nation, with Iranian-backed Shiites and Iraqi-nationalist Shiites jockeying for power, influence and state resources.

It's an explosive rivalry in a country where many remain wary of the Iranian government's influence even though trade and ties remain strong between its peoples. Iraq and Iran fought a bloody war in the 1980s that saw a million people killed.

Al-Sadr's nationalist rhetoric and reform agenda resonates powerfully with his supporters, who largely hail from Iraq's poorest sectors of society and were historically shut out of the political system under Saddam.

Al-Sadr's announcement that he is leaving politics has implicitly given his supporters the freedom to act as they see fit.

Iranian state television cited unrest and a military-imposed curfew in Iraqi cities for the reason for the border closures. It urged Iranians avoid any travel to the neighboring country. The decision came as millions were preparing to visit Iraq for an annual pilgrimage to Shiite sites, and Tehran encouraged any Iranian pilgrims already in Iraq to avoid further travel between cities.

Kuwait, meanwhile, called on its citizens to leave Iraq. The state-run KUNA news agency also encouraged those hoping to travel to Iraq to delay their plans.

The tiny Gulf Arab sheikhdom of Kuwait shares a 254-kilometer- (158-mile-) long border with Iraq.

The Netherlands evacuated its embassy in the Green Zone, Foreign Affairs Minister Wopke Hoekstra tweeted early Tuesday.

"There are firefights around the embassy in Baghdad. Our staff are now working at the German embassy elsewhere in the city," Hoekstra wrote.

Dubai's long-haul carrier Emirates stopped flights to Baghdad on Tuesday over the ongoing unrest. The carrier said that it was "monitoring the situation closely." It did not say when flights would resume.

On Monday, protesters loyal to al-Sadr pulled down the cement barriers outside the government palace with ropes and breached the palace gates. Many rushed into the lavish salons and marbled halls of the palace, a key meeting place for Iraqi heads of state and foreign dignitaries.

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HEADLINE	08/30 Germany upbeat, Russia cuts gas to France
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-france-germany-prices-8ca24af90f884d0bdd800937bcf0a658

GIST

BERLIN (AP) — German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Tuesday that his country is well-prepared to tackle a possible energy shortage because of Russia's squeeze on European gas supplies, even as fears grow about the juggernaut of rising prices that will likely hit consumers across the continent this winter.

Scholz spoke at the start of a two-day government retreat, attended also by Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, which will focus on the impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the energy supply in Europe.

Scholz cited Germany's decisions to reactivate oil and coal-fired power plants, mandate the filling of natural gas storage facilities and lease floating liquefied natural gas terminals. A decision on extending the operating life of Germany's three remaining nuclear power plants is also expected soon.

"All of this and many further measures have contributed to us being in a much better situation as far as supply security is concerned than could have been foreseen a couple of months ago," Scholz told reporters at the government's guest house in Meseberg, north of Berlin.

"We will be able to cope quite well with the threats that we face from Russia, which is using gas as part of its strategy in the war against Ukraine."

Scholz noted that gas storage facilities are already over 80% full, more than they were at this time last year, and the government is expected to agree on a further package of measures in the coming days to help German consumers cope with steeply rising energy prices.

Russia's state-controlled energy company Gazprom further reduced gas deliveries to the French company Engie, raising fears that Moscow might cut off gas completely as political leverage over the war in Ukraine.

Gazprom informed Engie of a reduction in gas deliveries, starting Tuesday, because of "a disagreement between the parties on the application of several contracts," according to the statement from the French energy company. Deliveries for Engie from Gazprom have significantly decreased since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, with recent monthly supply of 1.5 TWh, which compares to Engie's total annual supplies in Europe above 400 TWh, the statement said.

Engie had already secured the volumes necessary to meet its commitments to its customers, the statement said, adding that it has also put in place measures to "significantly reduce any direct financial and physical impact" that could result from Gazprom's interruption in gas supplies.

Russia has cut off or reduced natural gas to a dozen of European Union countries. Since spring, EU leaders have been appealing to the public to use less gas over the summer to build storage winter. The bloc has proposed member states voluntary cut their use by 15%. It's also seeking the power to impose mandatory cuts across the 27-nation bloc if there is risk of severe gas shortage or very high demand.

France, like other European countries, is trying to beef up its gas reserves for winter and fill up its storage by early autumn to avert an economic and political crisis.

The French government has rolled out an "energy sobriety" plan in June, targeting a 10% reduction in energy use by 2024.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne on Monday urged businesses to put in place energy saving plans, warning that companies would be hit first should the government be forced into rationing gas and electricity because of severe shortages.

In an effort to wean themselves off Russian gas and reduce the climate impact of the energy sector, European countries have significantly ramped up efforts to build wind, solar and other renewable forms of energy production.

	<p>Baltic Sea nations were due to meet Tuesday in Copenhagen, Denmark, to announce plans for a major increase in wind power production by 2030 as a way to free the region from overdependence on Russian natural gas.</p> <p>Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Denmark aim to increase the capacity for offshore wind seven-fold in the Baltic Sea to just under 20 gigawatts from the current under 3 gigawatts, the Politiken newspaper wrote.</p> <p>Up to 1,700 new offshore wind turbines would produce power equivalent to almost 20 nuclear power plants, providing enough electricity for 22-30 million households.</p> <p>“The war in Ukraine and climate change are happening at the same time. We have two crises on the table. We have to speed up the green transition, and we have to free ourselves from Russian fossil energy,” Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said in an interview with Politiken.</p> <p>Her Estonian counterpart, Kaja Kallas, said in the same interview that “you have to be connected to friends who won’t hit you in a crisis.”</p> <p>The daily, which had obtained a draft of the plan, said the countries have committed to increase energy cooperation in the form of strong development of offshore wind and, in the short term, import of liquefied gas.</p> <p>The plan is expected to be formally presented later Tuesday during a meeting of leaders from the Baltic countries and the European Union in Copenhagen.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 Containers no hindrance for migrants
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/arizona-donald-trump-doug-ducey-yuma-b3807f42f3e0429443e54c7c35e68e8d
GIST	<p>YUMA, Ariz. (AP) — Hours before Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey declared “a major step forward to secure our border” with the installation of 130 double-stacked shipping containers, hundreds of migrants found their way around them, belying his claim.</p> <p>They walked through tribal lands to the edge of a towering wall built during Donald Trump’s presidency to surrender to border agents waiting outside the reservation, expecting to be released in the U.S. to pursue asylum.</p> <p>Families, young parents carrying toddlers, elderly people and others easily waded through the knee-deep Colorado River before dawn Wednesday, many in sandals with shopping bags slung over their shoulders.</p> <p>The wall isn’t the issue it was in 2018 when Congress denied Trump funding for one of his top priorities, prompting the longest government shutdown in U.S. history. But last week’s events in Yuma are a reminder of obstacles that the government faces with border barriers: difficulty building on tribal land, most notably in the Tohono O’odham Nation in Arizona, and opposition from landowners, especially in Texas, where, unlike other border states, much property is privately owned.</p> <p>Ducey’s critics have seized on images from Univision network showing two containers that toppled during 11 days of construction for unknown reasons. Gary Restaino, the top federal prosecutor in Arizona, used a bilateral meeting in Mexico City to needle the governor Friday, tweeting, “We’re not dumping a bunch of shipping containers in the desert and calling it a wall to get cheap press.” Ducey retorted that “we’ve taken matters into our own hands” because the federal government hasn’t done enough.</p>

Migrants continue to avoid barriers by going around them — in this case, through a 5-mile (8-kilometer) gap in the Cocopah Indian Reservation near Yuma, a desert city of about 100,000 people between San Diego and Phoenix that has become a major spot for illegal crossings.

President Joe Biden halted wall construction his first day in office, leaving billions of dollars of work unfinished but still under contract. Trump worked feverishly in his final months to reach more than 450 miles (720 kilometers), nearly one-fourth of the entire border.

The Biden administration has made rare exceptions for small projects at areas deemed unsafe for people to cross, including four gaps in Yuma. It expects to award a contract for Yuma this fall and take up to 28 months to complete work.

When U.S. Customs and Border Protection announced its [Yuma plans](#) in July, Ducey said he couldn't wait. Like fellow Republican Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas, he has sparred with the Democratic administration over immigration policies, often suing and recently offering free bus rides to the East Coast for asylum-seekers who are released in the United States to pursue their cases.

"Arizona did the job the federal government has failed to do — and we showed them just how quickly and efficiently the border can be made more secure — if you want to," Ducey said to celebrate installation of the containers, which run the length of 13 football fields in five locations combined.

A string of 44 double-stacked containers ends abruptly in an open desert expanse. Farther north, at the Morelos Dam, containers plug several openings in an area that had become less traveled in recent months.

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HEADLINE	08/30 Ukraine breaks thru key occupied area
SOURCE	https://www.the-sun.com/news/6104620/ukraine-breaks-through-russias-defence/
GIST	<p>UKRAINE has broken through Russia's first line of defence in a spectacular fightback in a key occupied area.</p> <p>Forces yesterday launched a huge offensive in the southern Kherson region, seized early in the invasion.</p> <p>Footage later emerged of a Russian tank shelled in Kharkiv in the north.</p> <p>The push is part of a long-awaited fightback being launched by chiefs in Kyiv in an attempt to retake the south of the country.</p> <p>It follows weeks of Ukrainian attacks aimed at cutting off Russian forces there from main supply routes.</p> <p>Ukraine's Hromadske TV said three of its sources in Ukraine's military confirmed that the first line of defence had been broken in the area.</p> <p>Southern Command spokesperson Natalia Humeniuk announced the offensive in a news briefing and said it included the Kherson region.</p> <p>She said Ukraine had struck more than 10 ammunition storage bases in the past week, and they had "unquestionably weakened the enemy".</p> <p>She declined to give exact details of the counter-offensive, saying Russian forces in southern Ukraine remained "rather powerful".</p> <p>She added: "The counter-offensive is already ongoing for a while (in the sense of) exhausting the enemy and not giving him an opportunity to advance," Ms Humeniuk told Suspilne, adding that the offensive phase of this had begun on Monday."</p>

She added that “any military operation requires ‘silence’ regime”, urging Ukrainians to be patient.

She said: “Our main efforts have been focused on destroying the enemy’s ammunition storage bases. More than 10 of such bases were destroyed over the past week.”

In a telegram post the Ukrainian military said yesterday it had struck multiple targets in the region, including a factory in Beryslav and a [Russian army](#) post by the North Crimean Canal.

Kyiv officials claim to have used US-supplied Himars rocket systems to destroy three bridges crossing the Dnipro River, strikes it said would cut the Russian forces occupying Kherson off from weapons and troop reinforcements.

According to Western military sources, Kyiv’s strikes on the river crossings are part of a targeted effort to isolate Russian troops on the right (Western) bank of the river with the ultimate goal of recapturing the entire Kherson region.

[Moscow](#) relied on the bridges to resupply their troops stationed west of the Dnipro river, who are now at risk of becoming isolated from the rest of Russia’s occupying forces.

Russian outlets also reported on Monday that Ukraine had struck targets in the Kherson region - but reported that the strikes had focused on [civilian infrastructure](#).

Moscow-appointed regional official Vladimir Leontyev claimed on Monday that Ukrainian forces had shelled a hydropower plant and floodway in the Kherson city of Novaya Kakhovka, according to Russia’s TASS news agency.

Its forces also claimed to have shot down three ballistic missiles and 21 rockets reportedly fired by Ukrainian forces.

Russia captured the city of Kherson and its surrounding region with relatively little resistance in the early days of the invasion.

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HEADLINE	08/29 West faces record high temperatures
SOURCE	https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/california-sizzles-us-west-faces-134317433.html
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- Record-breaking temperatures are expected to bake the US West this week including in Southern California and Arizona, where more than 30 million people are already sweltering while facing an excessive heat watch.</p> <p>Temperatures are forecast to soar to about 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 Celsius) just east of San Diego and Los Angeles, with areas around Palm Springs and Palm Desert hitting 113 starting Tuesday, according to the National Weather Service. LA will climb into the mid-90s.</p> <p>The heat will spread into Washington and Oregon and even Montana, said Brian Hurley, a senior branch forecaster at the US Weather prediction center.</p> <p>“A lot of records are forecast to either be tied or broken,” Hurley said. “It is going to be a while for this heat.”</p> <p>As many as 44 records could be tied or beat from Tuesday to Thursday, with highs rising 20 to 25 degrees above normal in the northern Rocky Mountains and Pacific Northwest, Hurley said. Deviations from normal temperatures are bigger in the north because the area should be cooling down at this time of year. In Southern California and Arizona, readings could rise 5 to 10 degrees above normal.</p>

	<p>In preparation for the heat, California's grid operator is restricting power-plant maintenance from Aug. 31 to Sept. 6.</p> <p>The heat is mainly the result of a high-pressure ridge bearing down on the region, according to Hurley. "What is causing the heat is the placement of the ridge," he said. "It's all about that ridge."</p> <p>California's heat could drive millions of residents to seek relief with air conditioners, taxing energy supplies. Demand on the state grid will build from back-to-back days of heat as the week progresses. Electricity use will rise to nearly 44.8 gigawatts on Sept. 4 and then stay at elevated levels through the weekend, according to the California Independent System Operator. In California, 1 gigawatt is enough to power about 750,000 homes.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Colombia, Venezuela reestablish relations
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/29/americas/colombia-and-venezuela-reestablish-diplomatic-relations-intl-latam/index.html
GIST	<p>Bogota (CNN)Colombia and Venezuela have reestablished diplomatic relations, in a tectonic shift in South American regional politics.</p> <p>Colombian ambassador Armando Benedetti met on Monday with Venezuelan authoritarian leader Nicolas Maduro at Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas.</p> <p>"At this hour I'm received by President Nicolas Maduro, to whom I present diplomatic papers as Colombia's ambassador in Venezuela. We talked about the urgency to revive friendship ties that should have never been severed," Benedetti said on Twitter, posting several photos of himself with Maduro.</p> <p>Venezuela's ambassador to Colombia, Felix Plasencia, is scheduled to meet Colombian President Gustavo Petro in the upcoming days.</p> <p>The two countries have not had diplomatic relations since 2019, when Colombia's then-president Ivan Duque recognized opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's legitimate head of state.</p> <p>However, Colombia and Venezuela were part of the same country in the 19th century and share deep historical and cultural ties.</p> <p>Reviving the relationship with Venezuela was a campaign promise of Petro, who took office on August 7 and is the country's first left-wing president. Petro has sought to also make international ties with new progressives, such as the United States' Congressional Progressive Caucus.</p> <p>Venezuela is one of the most outspoken foes of US policy in the western hemisphere. Colombia meanwhile is a close ally to Washington, and US troops regularly conduct joint operations with their Colombian counterparts.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Hezbollah isolated but ever still powerful
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/26/middleeast/lebanon-hezbollah-40-years-mime/index.html
GIST	<p>London (CNN)Hezbollah capped off the 40th anniversary of its founding on Monday with large-scale celebrations on a stage in southern Beirut that featured holograms of fighters killed in battle, and videos showing off the group's historic confrontation with Israel. An interpretive dance, depicting how the group freed prisoners from ISIS in Syria, was a notable addition.</p> <p>Over the years, the Lebanese Shiite group has tried to rebrand itself from a paramilitary organization backed by Iran to a serious political and regional player. Forty years on, Hezbollah is militarily more powerful than ever, but also more globally isolated than it has ever been.</p>

Many countries including the United States, United Kingdom and Germany as well as Gulf Arab states and [the Arab League](#), have labeled the entire group a [terrorist organization](#), while the European Union and France consider only Hezbollah's military wing as such. Hassan Nasrallah, the group's leader, is considered a specially designated global terrorist by the United States and subject to American sanctions as a result.

The movement first emerged in 1982 as a response to Israel's invasion of Beirut during Lebanon's bloody civil war. The Israelis met their objective of expelling Palestinian fighters from the country, but catalyzed a more formidable enemy in Hezbollah as a result. Iran's new regime found the group to be an apt ally, both because of their shared Shiite ideology and because of Hezbollah's position in the heart of the Arab world. It began providing the group with funding and training soon after it emerged.

Since then, Hezbollah has expanded and flexed its military might. In 2000, Israeli forces withdrew from southern Lebanon after a protracted conflict with the group there. In 2006, it held its ground in a war against Israel when Israel sought to disarm it. During Syria's civil war, it successfully intervened on behalf of President Bashar al-Assad and helped bolster his defenses after the dictator violently quashed a popular uprising. The [group's political influence](#) appeared to be on a relentless rise, despite a domestic bid — backed by Saudi Arabia — to curb its power that was rapidly extending beyond Lebanon.

[Opinions at home](#) are divided, where 52% of Lebanese do not believe that Hezbollah promotes the country's stability, according to a [2021 Zogby poll](#), while the rest believe it still does. The sectarian breakdowns are starker. Eighty percent of Shia have confidence that Hezbollah benefits Lebanon's stability, as do majorities of Druze (64%) and Christians (56%); while no Sunni respondents expressed such sentiment, according to the poll.

Nasrallah was once considered a hero by Arabs for confronting Israel, but Shibley Telhami, a professor at the University of Maryland who has conducted extensive polling of the Arab world says, "public attitudes towards Hezbollah among Arabs may have been impacted by the Arab Spring uprisings, the Syrian war, sectarian tensions in Lebanon and Iranian-Arab rivalries."

"On an official level, Hezbollah is a resistance movement; however, its role has evolved beyond [Lebanon] as it morphed into a regional player," said Mohanad Hage Ali, a fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut. "To call Hezbollah a resistance movement is inaccurate."

Hezbollah has transformed into a major player in the Lebanese political scene. Opponents label it as a shadowy state within a state, led by Hassan Nasrallah since his ascension to secretary-general in 1992. A fiery and charismatic leader, Nasrallah has rarely appeared in public since the 2006 war with Israel, apparently for fear of assassination. At the group's anniversary rally this week, he made his commemorative speech via video.

The 2006 war with Israel was instigated by a cross-border raid by Hezbollah in which it [killed eight Israeli soldiers](#) and kidnapped two. Nearly 121 Israeli troops and 49 Israeli civilians were killed. About [270 Hezbollah fighters](#), 50 Lebanese soldiers and police died. Some [1,200 people](#) in Lebanon, mostly civilians, were killed in the Israeli assault.

"Hezbollah has always had an interest in a weak and obedient Lebanese military. Whether Lebanon is safer because of Hezbollah's actions is highly debatable," Emile Hokayem, Senior Fellow for Middle East Security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, told CNN. "On one level, Hezbollah has established a level of deterrence against Israel. On the other, Lebanon is objectively weaker, isolated, economically despondent, politically in disarray."

For Israel, the Shiite group's advanced weaponry poses a bigger threat than that of other Iran-backed Palestinian groups operating in Gaza.

	<p>Over the past decade, Hezbollah has played an increasingly active role in the region including Iraq and Yemen. The group's most significant foreign military commitment has been in Syria where thousands of fighters have been deployed to defend the Assad regime.</p> <p>"Hezbollah played a central role in the Syrian conflict, as it engaged in direct action, and reversed the opposition's gains," said Ali. "However, their interventions in Iraq and Yemen are more on the political and logistical side, specifically training and political facilitation."</p> <p>Nasrallah regularly uses inflammatory language against Gulf Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>"Hezbollah has poisoned Lebanese relations with the Gulf states, which have been crucial economic lifelines for the Lebanese diaspora and state," said Hokyem. "In Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and elsewhere, Lebanon is seen as a threat, too weak to constrain its main political party from endangering their security."</p> <p>Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese work in the oil-rich Gulf Arab states, sending billions in hard currency back home. Inward remittances account for 54% of Lebanon's economy, according to the World Bank.</p> <p>But the group now appears to be softening its tone towards the Gulf. Nasrallah in his recent 40th anniversary speech said, "we don't have a problem with Lebanon's relations with Arab countries and especially the Gulf countries, and for these relations to evolve and strengthen."</p> <p>"Now as Iran is about to return to the [nuclear deal] and resume diplomatic relations with the Gulf states, Hezbollah should logically follow suit, and de-escalate its rhetoric," Ali said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 Fukushima town lifts evac order after 11yrs
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/30/asia/futaba-fukushima-nuclear-evacuation-order-intl-hnk/index.html
GIST	<p>Tokyo (CNN)More than a decade after Japan's worst nuclear disaster, the town that hosts the disabled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant finally lifted its evacuation order on Tuesday, allowing former residents to come home.</p> <p>The town of Futaba, previously deemed off-limits, is the last of 11 districts to lift its evacuation order, a spokesman for the town's municipal office told CNN.</p> <p>On March 11, 2011, a 9.0-magnitude earthquake struck off Japan's east coast, triggering a tsunami that caused a nuclear meltdown at the power plant and a major release of radioactive material. It was the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986.</p> <p>More than 300,000 people living near the nuclear plant were forced to evacuate temporarily; thousands more did so voluntarily. Once-bustling communities were turned into ghost towns.</p> <p>In the years since, large-scale cleanup and decontamination operations have allowed some residents who once lived in the former exclusion zone to return.</p> <p>Futaba is home to the Tokyo Electric Power Company complex (TEPCO) and a railway station. Public facilities, such as the newly reopened municipal town office, are scheduled to restart operations next Monday.</p> <p>Photos from the town show empty shops, houses and temples, many of which bear external damage such as collapsed roofs and broken windows. The streets are largely empty. Abandoned cars and trucks sit in a field, covered in grime and rust.</p> <p>Before the nuclear disaster, Futaba had a population of about 7,100. As of late July, more than 5,500 people remain registered as residents, according to the municipal office spokesman.</p>

Residents have been allowed to enter the northeastern area of Futaba -- but not live there -- since March 2020, when experts said radiation levels did not exceed 20 millisieverts per year. That level is equivalent to two full-body CT scans and international safety watchdogs recommend it should be the limit of an individual's annual exposure to radiation.

Authorities began preparing for the town's reopening this year; in January, they launched a program allowing former residents to return temporarily, but only 85 people from 52 households took part, the Futaba official said. Photos from March also show workers tearing down collapsed structures and preparing to rebuild them.

It remains unclear, however, how many people will return -- and how long the town will take to recover.

More than 80% of the municipality is designated as a "difficult-to-return" zone still experiencing high levels of radiation, the spokesman said. And a survey conducted last August found that 60.5% of residents had decided not to return -- far exceeding the 11.3% who wanted to come back.

Futaba has no official timeline on when other areas of the town will be fully decontaminated.

But the spokesman expressed hope for the town's future, saying Futaba aims to increase its population to 2,000 by 2030.

"The evacuation order has lifted now, but we can't give a concrete number on how many people will come back," the spokesman said. "Of course, we'd like people to come back and support their ability to do so as best as we can."

If [other Japanese towns](#) affected by the 2011 nuclear disaster are any indication, Futaba has a long road ahead. Even places that lifted evacuation orders several years ago have continued to face challenges.

For instance, Katsurao village, which lies about 40 kilometers (24 miles) from the plant, reopened to residents in 2016, but some households are still waiting for their sections of the village to be decontaminated.

Others may still have concerns about radiation. Despite the decontamination efforts, a 2020 survey by Kwansei Gakuin University found 65% of evacuees no longer wanted to return to Fukushima prefecture -- 46% feared residual contamination and 45% had settled elsewhere.

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HEADLINE	08/29 UN inspectors head to Ukraine nuclear plant
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-n-inspectors-head-to-ukraine-nuclear-plant-as-safety-fears-grow-11661764952?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—United Nations atomic-energy inspectors are heading to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant amid fears that fighting in the area has damaged power lines and caused fires at the facility that could lead to nuclear catastrophe.</p> <p>The International Atomic Energy Agency said Monday that a team led by its director general, Rafael Grossi, was heading to the plant to assess damage, check safety and security systems and evaluate staff conditions. The inspection will begin on Wednesday and last until Saturday, according to an internal Ukrainian government document seen by The Wall Street Journal.</p> <p>Renewed shelling around the plant hit buildings some 100 yards from the reactor complex and damaged water pipelines that have now been repaired, the IAEA said, noting that it didn't know the full extent of the damage.</p> <p>Russian forces have occupied the plant, Europe's largest, and stationed military equipment there, while Ukrainian workers continue to operate it at gunpoint, according to Ukrainian officials.</p>

The trip is the IAEA's most important visit since Chernobyl in 1986, after the catastrophic accident that spewed radioactive dust across Europe, said Morgan D. Libby, a former IAEA official. "Everything else pales in comparison," he said.

Energoatom, Ukraine's state nuclear-power company, said Thursday that Zaporizhzhia's reactors had for the first time [been completely disconnected](#) from their regular Ukrainian grid power lines because of a fire that the company blamed on Russian shelling. Russia said Ukraine is to blame.

Two power units at the plant, which were reconnected to the grid last week after being shut down, are producing electricity for Ukraine's needs, Energoatom said Monday. The plant produced one-fifth of Ukraine's electricity before the war. Ukrainian officials say they believe Russia aims to steal its power by severing its connection with Ukrainian-held territory. Russia has denied this.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, on Monday accused Russia of shelling Enerhodar, the city where the plant is located, to intimidate locals and create a "propaganda picture" [aimed at blaming Ukraine](#) for the shelling. Russia said Ukraine was shelling the city.

In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he hoped the IAEA visit would put pressure on Kyiv. "Pressure on the Ukrainian side to stop shelling can reduce military tension," Mr. Peskov said.

Russia long demanded that IAEA inspectors access the plant via Russian-held territory, but it softened that position in recent days amid frantic diplomacy. Nuclear experts have cautioned that there are so many safety issues at the plant—the first in history to be occupied by a hostile power—that the delegation might need weeks on site to properly address them.

The IAEA usually focuses on monitoring countries' use of enriched uranium, but is now at the center of what it says is the first example of a war in a country with such widespread nuclear infrastructure as Ukraine.

In addition to the risks of damage to power lines, backup generators and radioactive material, the U.N. agency has warned that fighting [puts at risk](#) the ability to access Ukraine's reactors in an accident. The IAEA repeatedly has warned that the plant's short-handed and exhausted staff amounts to a nuclear-safety crisis in itself.

The Biden administration on Monday called for the "controlled shutdown" of the nuclear plant. John Kirby, a spokesman for the National Security Council at the White House, said the administration believes that "would be the safest and least risky option in the near term."

Mr. Kirby also said that by holding the plant, Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) "can hold Ukraine hostage with respect to their own electrical power capability."

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HEADLINE	08/29 Seattle mayor blasts homelessness groups
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3610734/rantz-seattle-mayor-privately-blasts-homelessness-groups-inexperienced-council/
GIST	<p>Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell blasted homeless activists, county groups, and "inexperienced" city council members in meetings with police officers. He argues they're getting in the way of his plan to remove encampments, implies he may pull funding from the regional homeless plan, and plans to back certain challengers to current councilmembers.</p> <p>Both Harrell and his deputy mayor and niece Monisha Harrell spent time meeting with police officers at various roll calls in different precincts. The intent was to help boost morale and slow the mass exodus of officers. It also allowed officers the opportunity to ask questions to the mayor. It comes on the heels of Harrell pushing through a plan to address police recruitment and retention.</p>

The speeches followed the same general outline. He discussed union contract negotiations, explained that he knows what it's like to be constantly attacked, and name-dropped relationships with the governor and the Biden administration.

But it also included blunt criticisms of the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA), the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program, and two city council members.

Harrell says he's angry about homelessness, and places blame elsewhere

The mayor repeatedly explained that he was not happy with the homelessness crisis in the city. He spreads the blame around, taking aim at groups that the city funds and some council members.

"Some of the same people that were talking about defunding are now saying, 'Well, we understand that we have to be aligned with the Harrell administration,'" Harrell told officers. "They still take shots at me on my homelessness strategy, because I, quite frankly, I don't think anyone has a right to sleep in a public space. I don't think anyone has a right to sleep on a sidewalk and I don't think anyone has the right to sleep in the park."

Harrell also criticized the bureaucracy. He said he personally experienced the hassle it created when he hoped to sweep a sidewalk downtown. He complained that he had to go from department to department to get a solution. It took too long, and departments weren't all working in unison.

Harrell: KCRHA is 'working against me'

The mayor has increased the number of encampment sweeps since becoming mayor, despite criticism from the KCRHA.

"I'm funding them 70%, over \$118 million. And I have no control over them. I'm one of nine on the board," Harrell said.

While he says he's used to being criticized by the press, he complains that KCRHA leadership stands in his way. Given the financial support, the city of Seattle offers, he expects some support. He hinted that the group may not receive the same level of funding in the future.

"I didn't set this stuff up. I get one vote out of nine, and they criticize my removal efforts. So I'm funding an organization that seems to be working against what I'm trying to do," Harrell said. "So now we're looking to revisiting that because my public safety strategy that I'm funding ... they criticize that. So why would I then, as mayor, invest \$118 million into a group that's really working against me? That's the hand that I've dealt."

Harrell said he is trying to lobby the KCRHA to start conducting more sweeps. He vowed "to hold them accountable," while wishing he had the investments back to spend on his own plan.

"No one has a right to camp out in a park where our children are supposed to play. I'm not supposed to see freaking syringes in a park," Harrell said.

A KCRHA spokesperson did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

'It's still a mess'

Harrell is also angry with the revolving door of criminal suspects that keep going back to the same spots of their previous arrests. And he doesn't only blame KCRHA.

"It's still a mess, not through [any] fault of yours. Not through [any] fault of mine. Opioids, fentanyl, sex trafficking. It's like this revolving door," Harrell explained. "We're looking at booking policies. We're looking at a contract with the jail. We're looking at people who provide services, LEAD service downtown. See what's working, what's just BS. We're really trying to rewrite the script."

The LEAD program is an arrest diversion program primarily used on suspects who may have untreated mental health issues or addiction problems. Its lead architect is Lisa Dugaard. Critics argue the program does not work and has created the prolific offender problem the city is experiencing.

“Quite candidly, although I have all due respect for Lisa Dugaard, I’m just not convinced that that is creating the outcomes we want,” he said.

Similar to his criticisms of the KCRHA, the mayor asked why he’d fund LEAD if they’re criticizing his approach. Dugaard could not be reached for comment.

Calling out — and replacing — the Council

Harrell reiterated that he does not support the defund movement and was working hard to invest in the department’s new recruitment and retention plan. He said his position on policing made it harder for him to win the election.

“You should know that when I ran for office, six council members of nine, six did not support me, and if that weren’t bad enough, I didn’t get the support of one colleague in a Democratic legislative district. If that weren’t enough, Pramila Jayapal, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, AOC... they all loaded up and supported my opponent,” he said.

Harrell believes he won because he “led with the fact that we’re going to have the best police department in the country.” He notes that he’s working hard to get council members to support his agenda.

“A couple of them... their resumes are quite thin. I say that as a nice way to say they’re inexperienced,” Harrell said while noting they’re now “smart enough to realize what the city wants” regarding the police.

Even though he credits the council for passing his recruitment and retention plan, it doesn’t mean he wants to keep the council the way it is.

“Quite frankly, I’m working on the city council races. Seven are up next year. I’m looking at people running for office. I’m talking to the judges about some of their policies, and we’re looking at those races. Like I say, politics, I know politics, and this is not child’s play. In order to get the city on the right track, I have to be that tenacious. You don’t see mayors doing that. I’ve already talked to two potential candidates for city council. There’s nothing unethical about that. That’s what I can do. I choose to do that.”

Is a contract coming?

The Seattle Police Officer’s Guild is currently negotiating a contract with the mayor’s office.

Officers say Harrell didn’t share many details about the contract negotiations. Harrell did say he expects to have something done by the end of the year. But the deputy mayor made clear that the administration does not believe the SPD should remain under a consent decree.

“It is very clear that this is not a city that needs the consent decree. That the improvements that have been made... that this department is a world-class department. And that the federal government knows it. All of our monitoring teams know it. And we’re just trying to cross the T’s and dot the I’s to make sure that we can get out of this so we can move beyond that phase.”

She promised to work closely with the department to see how they can move forward in the city.

General reception

Officers speaking with the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH shared similar sentiments about the mayor’s visit.

They appreciated that the mayor came down to speak with them. The previous mayor did not make a habit of visiting officers and hoping for dialogue. But many question the mayor’s recruitment and retention plan. They do not think sign-up bonuses will make a difference and they believe the only thing to retain officers would be a fair contract.

	<p>One officer said Harrell sounds “out of touch” when he chides officers who have left.</p> <p>Still, Harrell’s message is one that generally has not come out of City Hall in the last several years, and he expressed support for cops in ways other Seattle lawmakers are unwilling to.</p> <p>But his office did not respond to multiple requests for comment. His silence raises questions as to whether or not he’ll only be this blunt in private. That could undermine the support with officers that he’s going for.</p> <p>Politically, the messaging would likely connect with Seattleites who elected Harrell to support the police and handle crime and homelessness. But he’s been somewhat reluctant to go on the offensive when his critics slam his plans. The language he used in front of cops is not the language he used publically.</p> <p>He admits he doesn’t like to publicly criticize colleagues in the press, but if they’re truly getting in the way of progress on issues the public care about, being more vocal with his concerns could lead to the public pressuring the council to better embrace his agenda.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Iran drones to Russia; numerous failures
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/08/29/iran-drones-russia-ukraine-war/
GIST	<p>Russian cargo planes have quietly picked up the first of scores of Iranian-made combat drones for use against Ukraine, U.S. officials said, in a move that underscores deepening ties between Moscow and Tehran while also highlighting Russia’s struggles to supply its overstretched military.</p> <p>Transport planes departed Iran on Aug. 19 hauling at least two types of unmanned aerial vehicles, both capable of carrying munitions for attacks on radars, artillery and other military targets, according to intelligence gathered by U.S. and other spy agencies.</p> <p>But while the weapons could provide a significant boost for Russia’s war effort against Ukraine, the transfer has been marred by technical problems, security officials from the United States and an allied government said in interviews. In early tests by the Russians, the Iranian drones experienced numerous failures, the officials said.</p> <p>“There are a few bugs in the system,” said an allied security official whose government closely monitored the transfer. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity and that his nationality not be revealed to discuss sensitive intelligence. “The Russians are not satisfied,” the official said.</p> <p>The initial delivery of the Mohajer-6 and Shahed-series drones to Moscow is believed to be the first installment of a planned transfer of hundreds of Iranian UAVs of various types, Biden administration officials said, also speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the matter’s sensitivity.</p> <p>The arrival of the Iranian drones could help fill a crucial gap in Russia’s military campaign in Ukraine. Russia, which has 1,500 to 2,000 military surveillance UAVs, has relatively few attack drones of the type that can precisely strike targets deep inside enemy territory. Ukraine, by contrast, has used Turkish-made combat UAVs to wreak havoc on Russian armor, trucks and artillery since the early weeks of the conflict.</p> <p>The Biden administration warned in July that Russia was preparing to acquire large numbers of Iranian drones to conduct air-to-surface attacks, electronic warfare and targeting on the battlefield in Ukraine.</p> <p>Washington Post columnist David Ignatius reported last week that Iran had begun delivering the drones. But details of the transfer, including the types of UAVs provided and their purportedly lackluster performance so far, have not been previously reported.</p>

In interviews, the U.S. and allied security officials said Russian planes flew to an Iranian military facility to pick up the drones over several days in mid-August. The allied security official said the initial shipment included two models of Shahed drones, the Shahed-129 and Shahed-191, as well as the Mohajer-6. All are considered to be among Iran's top-of-the-line military drones, designed for attacks as well as surveillance.

The deal was negotiated over several months by a team led by Brig. Gen. Seyed Hojjatollah Qureishi, the chief of the supply and logistics division of Iran's Defense Ministry, and Russia's military attache in Tehran, the security official said. Under the arrangement, Iranian technical experts traveled to Russia to help set up the systems, and Russian military officers underwent training in Iran, the official said.

Iranian officials had responded obliquely to U.S. claims about the pending drone delivery. Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani last month acknowledged "Iranian and Russian technological cooperation" but said Tehran prefers a diplomatic settlement to the Ukraine conflict. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, asked last month about the reported deal to acquire Iranian UAVs, said the Russian presidency had "no comments on this matter."

While Iran has supplied military drones to armed proxy groups such as Yemen's Houthi rebels, it has rarely, if ever, tested such models against the kinds of sophisticated electronic jamming and antiaircraft systems used in Ukraine, said Michael Knights, a military and security expert with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Iran has demonstrated an ability to launch "swarm" drone attacks — involving multiple suicide drones massed against a single target — and Western governments will be watching closely to see whether Iran's UAVs can carry out such operations on an intensely contested battlefield, Knights said.

"These Iranian drones have not operated in a sophisticated air-defense environment before," he said. "The closest they've come to that is a[Houthi strikes against] Saudi Arabia or against U.S. bases in Iraq, and they have generally not done well. So I wouldn't be surprised that, in a more intense environment like Ukraine, that they would have some problems."

For Russia, the Ukraine conflict has exposed the country's failure to develop a line of combat drones similar to ones used by the United States for two decades, experts say. "They understand that they needed those drones yesterday in large quantities," said Sam Bendett, a Russian-military analyst at the Virginia-based research group CNA.

And Russia has really only two countries to which it can turn to "plug the capability gap" in combat drones: China and Iran. But China is deeply enmeshed in the global supply chain and does not want to supply combat UAVs because that would probably invite U.S. sanctions, he said.

That leaves Iran, which is not exposed in the same way and whose capability is homegrown, "which is what the Russians are going for," Bendett said. "Iran is also a Russian ally. So it's the only real choice left. Iran represents a very interesting case of having a domestic industry that grew up amid sanctions. And it represents a fairly robust capability."

The United States began in June to supply Ukraine with the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, commonly known as HIMARS, which can launch multiple rockets with precision at Russian military targets from nearly 50 miles away. The HIMARS have enabled Ukraine to destroy Russian ammunition depots and logistics supplies far behind the front lines.

"The Russians have no way to limit the damage HIMARS are inflicting on them now," said Dmitri Alperovitch, chairman of Silverado Policy Accelerator, a Washington-based think tank. "They hope attack drones can help."

Other NATO-provided long-range artillery, such as M777 howitzers capable of launching precision-guided rounds, also has added to the challenge facing Russia, said Rob A. Lee, an expert on the Russian military and a senior fellow with the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

“One of Russia’s biggest problems right now is its air force can’t interdict things behind Ukrainian lines,” Lee said. “They don’t have many long-range UAVs that can strike targets behind enemy lines. So they can’t prevent Ukraine from reinforcing its positions and restocking supplies. ... And a lot of their UAVs are getting shot down or lost to electronic warfare.”

While Russia is apparently seeking to ramp up domestic production of such drones, it is hampered by Western sanctions and export controls, which have stanching the flow of semiconductor chips essential to producing such weapons, analysts said.

“They’re relying on the black market, but the needs are vast,” Alperovitch said. “You need chips for everything from precision-guided missiles to aircraft to tanks, not to mention nonmilitary items in their own domestic industries. So there’s lots of demand in Russia for chips, and if Russia can procure fully made drones from Iran, it doesn’t need to use its precious supply of black market chips to make its own drones.”

Analysts said the transfer of Iranian drones is unlikely to affect the ongoing nuclear talks between Iran and world powers, which are proceeding on a separate track and have a different objective: eliminating Iran’s capacity to quickly build a nuclear bomb. But the further cementing of military ties between Iran and Russia is itself a worrisome development for the United States and its allies, experts said.

“The ever-closer alliance does give Russia some military procurement depth, which will be welcome in Moscow,” said Clifford Kupchan, chairman of the Eurasia Group. “The bigger message — which may be lost on [Russian President Vladimir] Putin for now — is that one of the world’s allegedly leading militaries is having to turn to Iran for help with key technologies, which shows just how drained their inventory is.”

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HEADLINE	08/30 Ukraine lures Russia missiles w/decoys
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/30/ukraine-russia-himars-decoy-artillery/
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine may be outgunned but in the latest sign it is not yet outfoxed, a fleet of decoys resembling advanced U.S. rocket systems has tricked Russian forces into wasting expensive long-range cruise missiles on dummy targets, according to interviews with senior U.S. and Ukrainian officials and photographs of the replicas reviewed by The Washington Post.</p> <p>The Ukrainian decoys are made out of wood but can be indistinguishable from an artillery battery through the lens of Russian drones, which transmit their locations to naval cruise missile carriers in the Black Sea.</p> <p>“When the UAVs see the battery, it’s like a VIP target,” said a senior Ukrainian official, referring to unmanned aerial vehicles encountering long-range artillery replicas.</p> <p>After a few weeks in the field, the decoys drew at least 10 Kalibr cruise missiles, an initial success that led Ukraine to expand the production of the replicas for broader use, said the senior Ukrainian official, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military matters.</p> <p>The use of rocket system decoys, which has not been reported previously, is one of many asymmetrical tactics Ukraine’s armed forces have adopted to fight back against a bigger and better-equipped invading enemy. In recent weeks, Kyiv’s operatives have blown up rail and electricity lines in occupied Russian territory, detonated explosives inside Russian arms depots and assassinated suspected collaborators.</p> <p>The destruction of Ukrainian replicas may partially account for Russia’s unusually boastful battle damage assessments on Western artillery, particularly the U.S.-made High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS.</p> <p>“They’ve claimed to have hit more HIMARS than we have even sent,” one U.S. diplomat observed.</p>

The lengths at which Ukraine has gone to protect Western-supplied rocket systems underscore their importance on the battlefield.

The systems are credited with blunting Russia's advance in the east and south by giving Ukraine the ability to strike from 50 miles away, laying waste to hundreds of high-valued Russian targets, including supply lines, arms depots and logistic and support hubs, U.S. defense officials say.

Last month, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu ordered his generals to prioritize the destruction of the long-range artillery systems after they struck key Russian supply lines.

Nearly every week, Shoigu and other Russian defense officials announce new successful strikes on Western-supplied rocket systems, including the lighter-weight U.S.-made HIMARS.

Earlier this month, a Pentagon spokesman categorically denied Russia's claims, declaring all U.S.-provided HIMARS accounted for.

"We are aware of these latest claims by Minister Shoigu, and they are again patently false," said Todd Breasseale, the Pentagon's acting spokesman. "What is happening, however, is that the Ukrainians are employing with devastating accuracy and effectiveness each of the fully accounted for precision missile systems."

The Pentagon says it has provided 16 HIMARS to Ukraine since the start of the war. U.S. allies have provided M270 rocket systems that have a similar functionality. It was not possible to independently verify how many are still operational or how many, if any, were destroyed.

The Russian habit of embellishing battlefield performance is hardly new, but experts say the decoys probably account for a dramatic disconnect.

"If the Russians think they hit a HIMARS, they will claim they hit a HIMARS," said George Barros, a military researcher at the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank. "Russian forces very well may be overstating their battle damage assessments after hitting HIMAR decoys."

Using decoys for deception has a long history for militaries in the East and West.

The Russians call the tactics of disguise and trickery "maskirovka," which has involved the procurement of inflatable MiG-31 fighter jets and mock S-300 missile systems among other tools. Slobodan Milosevic's Yugoslav forces used mock tanks and dummy targets against NATO forces during the Kosovo conflict. Allied powers during World War II used decoy equipment and fake signals intelligence to try to misdirect German forces ahead of the Allied invasion of Normandy.

For Ukraine, the battlefield advantages of decoys are twofold, military analysts said.

In a protracted artillery war, finding ways to degrade and deplete Russia's larger arsenal of rockets and missiles is critical for Ukraine's smaller army.

U.S. defense officials say Russia's stockpile of precision-guided missiles has been running low, and U.S. export controls on microchips are making it "a lot harder" for Russia to replenish those munitions, Colin Kahl, undersecretary of defense for policy, said earlier this month.

"A Kalibr missile launched at a fake HIMARS target in a field is a missile that can't be used against a Ukrainian city," said Rob Lee, a military analyst at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Another advantage of decoys is they could force Russians to take precautions and move their ammunition depots and command and control nodes farther from the front lines — beyond the anticipated range of the HIMARS.

	<p>“Such a reorganization would degrade the Russians’ ability to mass artillery fires — a tactic they’ve relied on to make gains in eastern Ukraine,” Barros said.</p> <p>The challenges that lay ahead for Ukraine’s military remain daunting. Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree last week to increase the size of Russia’s armed forces to 2.04 million from 1.9 million, in a move analysts said indicated a determination to keep fighting.</p> <p>U.S. officials estimate Russia has lost up to 80,000 troops, but Ukrainian forces have acknowledged losing 100 to 200 troops per day as the country braces for one of its coldest winters in decades.</p> <p>In describing the country’s replicas, the Ukrainian official said his military had no choice but to resort to unconventional tactics in fending off a bigger adversary. “A small Soviet army cannot beat a big Soviet army,” the official said. “We need to fight asymmetrically.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Scramble to find staff before classes start
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/08/pnw-schools-scramble-find-staff-start-classes
GIST	<p>As waves of COVID swelled last year, short-handed schools across the Northwest struggled to stay operational. Principals stepped onto the playground to monitor recess or into the cafeteria to help serve lunches. Districts hired community members holding emergency substitute licenses, often with no teaching experience, to ensure classrooms had adequate supervision. In the most extreme circumstances, schools canceled classes for a day or more, as happened in Oregon’s Salem-Keizer and Idaho’s Nampa districts, among others.</p> <p>The demands on staff were unprecedented, many educators said.</p> <p>Joaquín Rodríguez, who is going into his third year of teaching, remembers last year as a juggling act between his regular duties, filling in for absent colleagues during his prep periods and offering extra support to students wrestling with pandemic-related trauma.</p> <p>“Hopefully we’ll never see something as challenging as that again,” said Rodríguez, a multilingual science teacher at Franklin High School in Seattle.</p> <p>This year isn’t expected to be much better. Many educators and administrators across the Pacific Northwest are bracing for only slightly abated staffing challenges as they return to campuses in August and early September.</p> <p>“When I come into this next year, my worry is that if we can’t find a way to really address these issues in a meaningful way and meet the needs of our community, many educators ... are going to be looking for elsewhere to work,” Rodríguez said.</p> <p>Officials from both large urban school districts and rural districts in the region report ongoing challenges hiring a variety of essential staff, from bus drivers to special education teachers.</p> <p>In the Hillsboro School District west of Portland, Oregon’s fourth-largest school district, bus drivers and classified staff such as custodians are most in demand, officials said.</p> <p>This month, the district was seeking to fill nearly 50 bus driver vacancies — about 25% of the necessary workforce.</p> <p>By contrast, teacher vacancies five weeks before the school year were in fact “not too bad,” said Beth Graser, Hillsboro district spokesperson. Only 20 teaching positions were unfilled — about 2% of approximately 1,230 licensed positions in the district.</p>

But hiring for those positions now is also more challenging.

“In the spring, the applicant pool is much deeper — we would get anywhere from five to 50 applications for each position,” Graser said by email. “At this point, the pool is much shallower with only a handful of people applying.”

Staffing problems drove headlines during the last school year. At the time, district officials sought the help of legislators and sweetened their offers, from hiring and retention bonuses to increased benefits and pay.

Meanwhile, researchers studying the education labor market stress the importance of determining precisely where the needs are greatest and which barriers stand in the way of districts hiring and retaining employees.

“These are problems that, if we talk about it in a very generic way, I don’t know if policymakers end up implementing solutions that kind of move the ball forward,” said researcher Dan Goldhaber, director of the Center for Education Data and Research at the University of Washington. He is an author of a 2021 report that analyzed job postings from 216 Washington school districts to establish a real-time snapshot of which positions were going unfilled most frequently.

His research showed special education teachers, English language teachers, coaches and paraprofessionals, who are classified employees who assist students in the classroom, made up the majority of staff that schools were struggling to hire. Those trends, which were broadly true even before the pandemic, likely persist this year, Goldhaber said.

Since Oregon, Washington and Idaho all lack comprehensive, real-time data on school districts’ hiring needs, the states have largely pursued more broad-brush solutions, such as additional funding schools can use in a variety of ways.

Oregon state Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, who chairs the Senate Committee on Education, said a workgroup first convened in 2021 is still looking at midrange and long-term solutions, including ways to implement robust data collection.

“I think what’s going to be important for us is to be able to move beyond anecdote and get a clear sense of what’s out there,” he said.

Ongoing Need for Subs

Caitlin Tumlinson, who teaches Spanish at Lakeside High School in the Nine Mile Falls School District northwest of Spokane, estimated she was asked to sub for absent colleagues during her prep period around 15 times in the last school year.

“In a 180-day school year, that’s a large percentage,” she said. But she wasn’t the only one stepping up outside of her normal duties. Classified staff who held bachelor’s degrees and the district’s chief financial officer became certified substitutes to help out.

About 15% to 20% of needed substitute positions were going unfilled on a typical day last year, according to data Tumlinson provided from the Nine Mile Falls District.

That’s similar to Hillsboro in Oregon, where about 20% of teacher absences were unable to be filled by a sub on an average day, Graser said.

Short- and long-term substitutes are still in high demand as the new school year begins.

New Jersey-based company Education Solution Services, which 21 Oregon school districts partner with, is looking to hire 2,500 substitutes statewide in addition to the 1,300 already on the books. The company is offering bonuses for referrals that lead to hires and bonuses tied to various lengths of service.

In Washington and Oregon, emergency certifications for full-time teachers and substitutes have allowed more people from local communities to step into the classroom and help. More than 1,100 emergency substitutes were hired in Oregon during the last school year, according to data from the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission that was first reported by the Oregon Capital Chronicle.

Next: ‘A new lifestyle’: How two refugees are adapting to WA state

The emergency certifications have drawn criticism from some, since applicants weren’t required to have any teaching experience. And in Oregon, neither of the emergency certifications require a bachelor’s degree. Its emergency substitute license was approved in 2021, just weeks after the school year began.

State leaders, Dembrow said, “came to realize what thin margins the schools were operating on. People had to be away because of COVID, and there were no reserves for them.”

Oregon earlier this year extended the emergency substitute certification option through the coming school year, recognizing that schools’ needs for substitutes has not abated in time for the coming year.

Michael Fuller, a Portland civil rights attorney who first got his emergency substitute certification this past spring, said he began the process in February after reading news stories about the impact of substitute shortages on students and full-time staff. It took him about a month to complete a background check, take the necessary trainings and be cleared to substitute

“It’s been incredibly rewarding,” Fuller said. “It’s a very unique opportunity, and I think people would be impressed with the quality of students in Oregon schools right now.”

A Dearth of Data

During those strained initial months of last school year, Goldhaber’s research shed light on the fact that some positions were much more in demand than others.

Goldhaber, who is based in Seattle but conducts research across the nation, set out last fall to compile data that would show which types of employees — not just teachers — Washington schools were most in need of hiring.

His report, released in November 2021, showed that hiring needs varied with the size of the district and the poverty level in the community it serves.

Across all job categories, rural districts generally had a greater need for all staff compared to more urban districts. Higher-poverty districts also had more needs than lower-poverty school districts.

Notably, positions seeking classroom paraprofessionals were nearly double that of teacher postings statewide, Goldhaber observed.

Listings for special education teachers also vastly outpaced other specializations.

Goldhaber and his research colleagues wanted to draw out these insights on the education labor market in Washington because the state does not yet compile such data itself.

Media coverage of hiring challenges often deals with the shortage “as if it exists everywhere for all teachers and all schools, and that is not at all the way it is,” Goldhaber said. “It’s really clear there are much more extreme challenges to hiring teachers in certain specialty areas, such as STEM and special ed and [English-language learners], and that different kinds of districts and schools also have a much more challenging situation.”

It’s that sort of nuance, he said, that can help inform leaders’ search for solutions.

As an example, Goldhaber pointed to other states that have implemented pay incentives to hire more special education teachers, such as Hawaii, which began offering those teachers a \$10,000 bump in their annual salary in 2020. A year later, the state's special education vacancy rate had halved from 2019.

But more commonly, Goldhaber said, "a lot is being spent in generic ways and not targeting (specialties)."

State leaders in the Pacific Northwest expressed growing interest in such data to better tailor funding and support.

Washington's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, for example, is "working to improve our educator workforce supply and demand data systems so we can more accurately estimate teacher vacancies," spokesperson Katy Payne said in an email.

In March, Oregon legislators tasked the Oregon Department of Education and the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission with creating a more streamlined job application database that will make it easier for educators to apply for jobs in multiple school districts at the same time. That could also increase the likelihood of collecting statewide data on school staff vacancies.

Relief on the Way

Still, school leaders pointed to bolstered state funding that should provide some relief.

In Oregon, that included a funding increase of \$78 million that school districts can use to fund teacher recruitment and retention initiatives. They can also reimburse substitute teachers and paraprofessionals for past and future training costs through January 2024.

"I am really looking forward to seeing how those plans play out over the next few months to see which strategies we want to build on," Dembrow said.

Idaho's Legislature pushed more than \$100 million into increased teacher salaries this year. And in a more targeted move, it passed a law to establish incentives for teachers to stay in rural or high-poverty schools. In the first year, 750 teachers could qualify for \$1,500 each. The incentives will increase each year over four years.

Washington elected to provide schools with a 5.5% cost-of-living increase for all staff this spring. In some districts, that money will automatically be passed through to teachers. In other districts, unions and districts are bargaining over it.

The state Legislature also approved an increase to the per-student funding level for mental health professionals, which could enable districts to hire more psychologists and counselors. Based on current projections, it will cost the state around \$114 million in the first year.

Julie Popper, Washington Education Association spokesperson, said bringing in more mental health professionals also helps retain teachers.

"A lot of our educators are saying that since the pandemic, more and more students are showing up with acute behavioral and mental health needs that get in the way of their learning," Popper said. "Sometimes that can get in the way of learning for the whole classroom. So those services are really critical to educators being able to do the kind of teaching they need to do on the curriculum."

Meanwhile, other positions remain stubbornly difficult for schools to staff. Bus drivers are one. And paraprofessionals, who are historically paid lower wages, are being drawn off to better-paying jobs in other fields.

But the picture isn't all bleak. Tumlinson, the Spanish teacher in the Nine Mile Falls district, said she is heading into the new year feeling better rested after this summer than after the last two. And she's less worried about the impact of changing COVID policies disrupting schedules.

	<p>“Personally, I am optimistic that this is going to be more normal in a way we haven't seen in the last couple of years,” Tumlinson said.</p> <p>Rodríguez also said he feels some pressures have eased, but he’s more guarded about how this year could go.</p> <p>“There’s definitely work we need to do to make sure there’s protection and corrections in our system,” he said. “That workload hasn’t necessarily gone away, and I don’t know if we have the ability to create more hours in a day, so we definitely need more hands.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 NASA moon rocket launch postponed
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2022-08-29/nasas-artemis-i-moon-rocket-launch-postponed
GIST	<p>NASA’s test of the rocket and crew capsule that will one day take the first female and person of color to the moon will have to wait for another day.</p> <p>The agency called off the launch of its Space Launch System rocket and Orion crew capsule after several issues came up during the countdown to launch, including engine problems and fuel leaks.</p> <p>The rocket is in a “safe and stable” condition after a temperature problem was identified with one of the engine’s boosters. Engineers tried to solve the problem by running super-cold liquid hydrogen through it, but they ultimately could not get the temperature down.</p> <p>“Launch controllers were continuing to evaluate why a bleed test to get the RS-25 engines on the bottom of the core stage to the proper temperature range for liftoff was not successful, and ran out of time in the two-hour launch window,” NASA said in a statement. “Engineers are continuing to gather additional data.”</p> <p>NASA paused the countdown to launch 40 minutes from liftoff as engineers tried to solve the issue. The process was already close to an hour late due to thunderstorms off Florida’s Kennedy Space Center in Florida’s Cape Canaveral.</p> <p>The next available launch date is Sept. 2, but Derrol Nail, the NASA launch commentator, said “we must wait to see what shakes out from their testing” of the engine.</p> <p>Nail also said that the issue that occurred on Monday was one they had wanted to previously test during an earlier dress rehearsal but were unable to.</p> <p>“This was the first opportunity for this team to see this live in action,” Nail said.</p> <p>The mission, called Artemis I, is the “first in a series of increasingly complex missions to build a long-term human presence at the moon for decades to come,” according to NASA. Artemis II aims to take a crew around the moon no earlier than 2024, and Artemis III will land the first woman and person of color on the moon.</p> <p>The Orion crew capsule will travel 40,000 miles beyond the far side of the moon and stay in space longer than any human spacecraft has without docking to a space station. No humans will be on board. Instead, mannequins will ride on the spacecraft with sensors that measure factors like radiation and vibrations.</p> <p>One of the goals of the Artemis program is to learn how to live on the moon so that the U.S. can safely send people to Mars.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 Severe thunderstorms, winds kill 2 Midwest
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/30/us/storms-power-outages-michigan-ohio.html
GIST	<p>Severe thunderstorms rolled through southern Michigan and northwest Ohio on Monday, leaving more than 680,000 customers without power and killing two people, including a 14-year-old girl who was electrocuted by a downed power line, the authorities said.</p> <p>A line of storms, which had dissipated by Monday night, produced wind gusts from 60 to 80 miles per hour in parts of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio, prompting severe thunderstorm warnings throughout the day, said Bob Oravec, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.</p> <p>In Toledo, Ohio, a woman was killed by a tree that fell during the storm, Sterling Rahe, a spokesman for the Toledo Fire & Rescue Department, said in a statement.</p> <p>The woman, who was not identified by the authorities, was found dead in the backyard of her home, where the tree had fallen, Mr. Rahe said.</p> <p>The 14-year-old girl, who was also not identified by the authorities, had been walking with a friend in the backyard of her home in Monroe, Mich., about 40 miles southwest of Detroit, when she thought she smelled a bonfire and reached for a stick, unaware that it was a charged electrical line, the Monroe Public Safety Department said in a statement. She was found dead by rescue workers.</p> <p>As of Monday night, about 640,000 customers were without power in Michigan, according to PowerOutage.us, which aggregates data from utilities across the United States. The storms moved through Detroit, which might explain why so many people lost power, Mr. Oravec said. In Indiana, about 26,000 customers were without power; in Ohio, there were about 20,000, according to the website.</p> <p>More storms were forming in central Illinois and northwestern Indiana on Monday night, and some areas could be hit with another round of strong winds on Tuesday, Mr. Oravec said.</p> <p>Thunderstorms are typical in the Midwest during the summer. On Monday, hot and humid air helped lines of severe thunderstorms form, Mr. Oravec said.</p> <p>“If the atmospheric conditions are right, they can race out really quickly,” he added. “And the high winds can develop with the thunderstorms — and that’s what happened today.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 Day 188 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/30/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-188-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukrainian troops are mounting a long-awaited counteroffensive in the southern region of Kherson, military officials have said. “Today we started offensive actions in various directions, including in the Kherson region,” Ukraine’s southern command spokesperson, Natalia Humeniuk, said on Monday. She declined to provide more details about the new offensive but said Ukraine’s recent strikes on Russia’s southern logistical routes had “unquestionably weakened the enemy”. Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, added in a Monday evening address: “If they want to survive, it is time for the Russian military to flee. The occupiers should know: we will oust them to the border. To our border, the line of which has not changed.” • Kyiv’s forces have broken through Russian defences in several sectors of the frontline near the city of Kherson, a senior adviser to Zelenskyy claimed. Oleksiy Arestovych said Ukrainian forces were also shelling the ferries in the Kherson region that Moscow is using to supply Russian-occupied territory on the west bank of the Dnieper river. A separate Ukrainian military source told CNN that its forces have taken back four villages near the city of Kherson after breaking through the frontline in three places, with the main “target” being Kherson. The operation began with heavy shelling of Russian positions and the rear, forcing them to flee, the source was quoted as saying.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Ukrainian barrage of rockets left the Russian-occupied town of Nova Kakhovka in the Kherson region without water or power, officials at the Russian-appointed local authority told Russia's RIA news agency. The town lies just to the east of the city of Kherson. • A team of inspectors from the UN nuclear watchdog arrived in Kyiv on Monday night en route to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief, Rafael Grossi, said a team will visit the plant from Wednesday to Saturday. "We must protect the safety and security of Ukraine's and Europe's biggest nuclear facility," Grossi tweeted. Missiles and shells are frequently hitting areas around the power station and nearby towns, prompting fears it may be too dangerous for the mission to proceed. • The Kremlin said the IAEA mission was "necessary" but has ruled out vacating the site. Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said Ukraine expects the IAEA delegation to "state the facts" regarding the violation of all nuclear safety protocols, adding that Russia "is putting not only Ukraine but also the entire world at threat of risk of a nuclear accident". • Russian forces fired at Enerhodar, the city where the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is located, according to Ukraine's armed forces. Zelenskyy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, also appeared to confirm the reports on his Telegram channel alongside a video of firefighters dousing burning cars. • Russia is struggling to find more soldiers to fight in Ukraine and has expanded recruitment efforts by eliminating the upper age limit and by tapping into prisons. "Many of these new recruits have been observed as older, unfit and ill-trained," a Pentagon official told journalists on Monday. Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, decreed last week that his army would increase by about 10%, to 1.15 million servicemen, starting January next year. • Ukrainian officials have warned politicians, experts and opinion leaders not to speculate about the progress of a military counteroffensive. Spokesperson for Ukraine's southern command, Nataliya Humenyuk, said the operation in Kherson needed "silence" as media attention could affect the results. Ukraine's presidential adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, added it was necessary to wait for official statements from Ukraine's Ministry of Defence and army. "I understand our wishes and dreams ... But war is not 'content'. Let's filter information and work professionally out of respect for our defenders," he wrote on Telegram. • Russia has alleged a second Ukrainian was involved in the killing of Darya Dugina. Russia's FSB security service accused without evidence a second Ukrainian citizen of acquiring fake documents and preparing the car bomb that killed the daughter of an ultranationalist Russian ideologue this month. • Gas shortages across Europe are likely to last for several winters to come, the chief executive of Shell has said, raising the prospect of continued energy rationing as governments push to develop alternative supplies. Speaking at a press conference in Norway on Monday, Ben van Beurden said the situation could persist for several years. • Western technology companies, including Ericsson and Nokia announced plans for complete exits from Russia on Monday, following Dell's withdrawal last week.
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HEADLINE	08/30 Zelensky tells Russia forces 'time to flee'
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/30/zelenskiy-tells-russian-forces-to-flee-as-ukraine-counteroffensive-begins-in-kherson
GIST	<p>The long-awaited counteroffensive by Ukrainian troops appears to have started in the southern region of Kherson, with the president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, saying: "If they want to survive, it is time for the Russian military to flee."</p> <p>Ukrainian troops have broken through Russian defences in several areas of the frontline near the city of Kherson, a senior adviser to Zelenskyy claimed.</p> <p>Oleksiy Arestovych said in a video interview Ukrainian forces were also shelling the ferries in the Kherson region that Moscow is using to supply Russian-occupied territory on the west bank of the Dnieper river. But he cautioned Ukrainians against expecting a quick win in the south.</p>

In an update posted to his official Telegram account Arestovych described the offensive as a “slow operation to grind the enemy”. “Of course, many would like a large-scale offensive with news about the capture by our military of a settlement in an hour,” he wrote. “But we don’t fight like that ... funds are limited.”

Zelenskiy did not address the counteroffensive specifically during his Monday evening address but said: “The occupiers should know: we will oust them to the border. To our border, the line of which has not changed.”

Those who surrendered would be treated under the Geneva conventions, he said, adding: “If they do not listen to me, they will deal with our defenders, who will not stop until they liberate everything that belongs to Ukraine.”.

Ukrainian troops have taken back four villages near the city of Kherson after breaking through the frontline in three places, CNN reported, quoting a Ukrainian military source, with the main “target” being Kherson. The operation began with heavy shelling of Russian positions and the rear, forcing them to flee, the source was quoted as saying.

Sergiy Khlan, a local deputy and adviser to Kherson’s regional governor told Ukraine’s Pryamyi TV channel that a “powerful artillery attack on enemy positions in ... the entire territory of the occupied Kherson region” was launched on Monday.

“This is the announcement of what we have been waiting for since the spring - it is the beginning of the end of the occupation of Kherson region,” he added. “What is happening now is a prepared, well-balanced start of a counteroffensive,” Khlan told Agence France-Presse.

Russia’s defence ministry acknowledged a new Ukrainian offensive had been launched in the Mykolaiv and Kherson regions but said it had failed and the Ukrainians had suffered significant casualties, RIA news agency reported. The “enemy’s offensive attempt failed miserably”, it said.

A Ukrainian barrage of rockets left the Russian-occupied town of Nova Kakhovka just east of the city of Kherson without water or power, officials at the Russian-appointed local authority later told the outlet.

The battlefield reports could not be independently verified.

Earlier on Monday, a spokesperson for Ukraine’s southern command, Nataliya Humenyuk, confirmed the counteroffensive had started in Kherson province after a video circulated online that allegedly showed a soldier from the Russian-run self-proclaimed republic of Donetsk saying Ukrainian forces had broken through the first line of defence.

“Today we started offensive actions in various directions, including in the Kherson region,” Humeniuk told a briefing, adding that Ukraine’s forces had struck more than 10 sites in the past week and “unquestionably weakened the enemy”.

Humenyuk declined to give details, saying Russian forces in the south remained “quite powerful” and that the operation needed “silence” as media attention could affect the results. Her claims could not be independently corroborated.

She urged local residents to either leave urgently or seek shelter.

Humenyuk said Russian forces were strong and that even though morale was low among their ranks, “it was too early to relax”. Western and Ukrainian military intelligence has noted a buildup of Russian troops and equipment this summer, suggesting Russia was preparing its own offensive.

	<p>However, Ukraine’s presidential adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, warned politicians, experts and opinion leaders not to speculate about the progress of a military operation before Ukraine’s Ministry of Defence and army issued official statements.</p> <p>“I understand our wishes and dreams ... But war is not ‘content’. Let’s filter information and work professionally out of respect for our defenders,” he wrote on Telegram.</p> <p>Zelenskiy agreed: “Anyone want to know what our plans are? You won’t hear specifics from any truly responsible person. Because this is war. And this is what it is during the war.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 Rare rebuttal in China on zero-Covid policy
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/30/chinese-thinktank-makes-rare-public-call-for-beijing-to-ease-zero-covid-policy
GIST	<p>A Chinese thinktank has issued a rare public disagreement with the ruling Communist party’s severe “zero-Covid” policy, saying curbs that shut down cities and disrupt trade, travel and industry must change to prevent an “economic stall”.</p> <p>The Anbound Research Center gave no details of possible changes but said on Monday that Xi Jinping’s government needed to focus on shoring up sinking growth. It noted the US, Europe and Japan were recovering economically after easing anti-disease curbs.</p> <p>“Preventing the risk of economic stall should be the priority task,” the thinktank said in a report titled: It’s Time for China to Adjust Its Virus Control and Prevention Policies.</p> <p>Even such mild public disagreement with official policy is almost unknown in a politically sensitive year when Xi, China’s most powerful leader since at least the 1980s, is expected to try to extend his time as president.</p> <p>The report, dated Sunday, was posted on the Anbound Research Center’s accounts on the popular WeChat messaging platform and the Sina Weibo microblog service, but was deleted from both on Monday afternoon.</p> <p>The anti-virus curbs are widely expected to stay in place at least until after a Communist party meeting in October and November, at which Xi is likely to break with tradition and award himself a third five-year term as leader.</p> <p>Economists warn that China needs to boost growth that sank to 2.5% over a year earlier in the first half of 2022, less than half the official annual target of 5.5%, after Shanghai and other industrial centres shut down starting in late March to fight virus outbreaks.</p> <p>“China’s economy is at risk of stalling” due to the “impact of epidemic prevention and control policies”, the thinktank said.</p> <p>The economy is also under pressure from a plunge in real estate activity after Beijing tightened controls on the industry’s use of debt.</p> <p>Economists and public health experts have warned since mid-2021 that zero Covid, which aims to keep the virus out of China by isolating every case, is unsustainable. Officials respond that they have no alternative because letting the virus spread would overwhelm Chinese hospitals.</p> <p>A Shanghai physician with 3 million followers on social media, Zhang Wenhong, was shut down by official criticism and targeted by a plagiarism investigation in 2021 after he suggested China’s strategy could change and the world “needs to learn how to coexist with the virus”.</p>

Founded in 1993, Anbound says it has served the Communist party's central financial and economic leading group and provided research to government agencies and financial institutions.

Its report gave no indication whether it might represent the thinking of officials who are unhappy with the soaring economic and human cost of zero Covid.

China's policy has kept deaths and infection numbers low but led to a wave of business failures.

News reports say local governments are cutting public services and wages for civil servants to pay for virus testing and anti-disease measures.

The economic impact of repeated shutdowns of companies and neighbourhoods is more severe than last year, the thinktank said. It said that "freezing effect" might be even worse than when the outbreak began in 2020 and the whole economy shut down temporarily.

On Monday, the southern city of Shenzhen, a centre for technology and finance that borders Hong Kong, announced a three-day closure of some residential areas to contain an outbreak and shut down the world's biggest electronics market.

Also on Monday, the government of Shenyang, the most populous city in the north-east, postponed the start of in-person classes this week for primary and high school students.

China needs to "focus on economic recovery and gradually integrate with the world", the Anbound report said.

Travel curbs in China keep out most foreign visitors. The government has stopped replacing passports that expire and has called on the public to avoid going abroad.

Last week, the US government cancelled 26 flights by Chinese airlines to China from the US in a dispute over Beijing's anti-virus controls. China earlier forced American carriers to cancel the same number of flights after some passengers tested positive for the virus.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Once eradicated, polio returns to the US
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/29/polio-us-vaccines-new-york-rockland-county
GIST	<p>This June, a young man from Rockland county, New York, went to the emergency room. He'd been feverish for five days and was suffering from a stiff neck, pain in his back and abdomen, and constipation. Even more concerning, for two days his legs had been abnormally weak. Doctors suspected the man had acute flaccid myelitis – muscle weakness caused by inflammation of the spinal cord, typically stemming from a viral infection. Lab tests revealed a shocking diagnosis: the culprit was the poliovirus.</p> <p>Throughout the first half of the 20th century, thousands of children died or were paralyzed due to polio; there were 20,000 cases of polio-induced paralysis in 1952 alone. Polio's eradication from the US in 1979 thanks to vaccines is one of the greatest achievements of modern medicine. In the 21st century, there had been just three known instances of polio in the US – all thought to be imported – affecting a total of 10 people, with only one involving community spread.</p> <p>Alerted to the man's diagnosis, public health experts from the CDC, the New York health department and Rockland county sprang into action. Through wastewater testing, they discovered that the poliovirus had been circulating in Rockland county since May. They also found it in wastewater from neighboring Orange county and New York City. By mid-August, it became clear that not only was this the second case of polio from community transmission since 1979, it was probably a "silent outbreak" that had infected hundreds.</p> <p>How did this happen?</p>

Polio's return to the US resulted from the confluence of a complicated set of scientific and societal factors that allowed a mutated version of the virus to start circulating in a susceptible community. This is the story of a life-saving vaccine with an unfortunate loophole that produced that version of the virus, and a calculated anti-vaccine campaign that created a vulnerable population.

The virus

The poliovirus found in New York is not the same virus that once ripped through urban communities. Thanks to vaccination, that original, "wild" poliovirus has been eliminated from all but two countries: Pakistan and Afghanistan. But paradoxically, most polio cases that emerge nowadays – including the one infecting the man from Rockland – are derived from the vaccine itself.

There are two types of polio vaccine, both developed during the 1950s. The oral polio vaccine, created by Albert Sabin, uses a live, weakened form of the virus to induce immunity. It is not dangerous to the person who receives it; the virus cannot pass from the patient's gut to their spinal cord, where it could cause paralysis.

But the weakened vaccine virus can acquire mutations that turn it into a live virus. As a result, for a few weeks after someone receives the vaccine, they excrete infectious, vaccine-derived poliovirus. Vaccine-derived poliovirus poses no threat to vaccinated people. But anyone unvaccinated is at risk.

Since the Covid pandemic, the pool of unvaccinated, vulnerable people has grown. The oral polio vaccine is typically used in developing countries because it is easier to administer and can be stored at room temperature. But just like everything else during the pandemic, campaigns using the oral polio vaccine were disrupted. So far this year, there have been an [estimated 20 outbreaks](#) occurring around the world, all from vaccine-derived poliovirus.

The other type of polio vaccine, developed by Jonas Salk, uses an inactivated version of the virus. While that vaccine is safer – a dead virus can't mutate and come back to life – it doesn't provide as robust protection. Because the oral vaccine travels through the gut, it offers local immunity there and prevents the vaccinated person from becoming reinfected. The inactivated vaccine, which is delivered via injection, stimulates an immune response that stops the virus from damaging neurons and causing symptoms but doesn't actually prevent infection.

Since 2000, the inactivated polio vaccine has been used exclusively in the US. That means the current outbreak originated somewhere the oral polio vaccine is used, and was unwittingly brought into the US by a person who didn't know they were infected. (Experts don't yet know where from.) It also means that much of the vaccine detected in the wastewater in New York is probably from vaccinated people infected with vaccine-derived virus but who don't have any symptoms and aren't at risk of paralysis.

"A virus that reverted from the vaccine emerged from a kid that was vaccinated, and because other humans that were around were not vaccinated or resistant to the virus, the virus has started to take hold in the human population," explains Raul Andino, a professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of California, San Francisco. "This case of imported virus came into New York and took hold in the whole population because everybody's susceptible to infection ... Basically, we have a silent epidemic, and that doesn't cause a problem until somebody is not vaccinated."

The community

Just up the Hudson River from New York City lies Rockland county, where a handful of villages and small towns are notable for two things: having one of the largest populations of ultra-Orthodox Jews in the country, and extraordinarily low vaccination rates. Those low rates – only [37% in one zip code](#) – created precisely the kind of host community that Andino said the poliovirus could exploit.

They're also not an accident. Low vaccination rates in Orthodox communities across New York are the result of an organized campaign waged by national anti-vaccine groups for years.

Vaccine hesitancy is not characteristic of Orthodox Judaism. The vast majority of rabbis and Jewish scholars interpret several passages in the Torah and other Jewish texts as being supportive of vaccines.

“This is not an Orthodox Jewish problem. In most Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods, it’s 100% vaccination,” says Aaron Glatt, chief of infectious diseases at Mount Sinai South Nassau and an Orthodox rabbi. “The Jewish religion mandates you to get vaccinated, as far as I’m concerned. That’s my official opinion as a rabbi. I tell my congregation, you have to get vaccinated. [That’s the Jewish way of protecting lives.](#)”

Orthodox mothers in Israel who choose not to vaccinate their children acknowledge that they are doing so against the advice of their rabbis, according to a [2021 paper](#) published in the Journal of Religion and Health. Their motivations resemble those of other vaccine-hesitant parents, often rooted in standard anti-vaccine messaging, such as being “more afraid of the vaccines than of the diseases”.

“I think that there are people that may not be fully well connected to accurate information, and they are preyed upon by individuals that know exactly how to take advantage of these populations,” says Glatt. “And it’s across all ethnic groups; it’s across all religions.”

Indeed, anti-vaccine pockets have sprouted up across the US – some organic, others seeded by national groups – including in wealthy, liberal enclaves in Marin county, California; Portland, Oregon; and Clark county, Washington, as well as in an Amish community in Ohio and among Somali refugees in Minnesota. Questions about vaccines started to emerge in the early 2000s with a new generation of parents who had no first-hand knowledge of vaccine-controlled diseases such as measles and polio, says Saad Omer, director of the Yale Institute for Global [Health](#). “In the minds of successive cohorts of parents, the salience of real or perceived side effects go up compared to the salience of actual disease,” Omer says. “That happened over several decades because vaccines were so successful in controlling polio in the US.”

Seizing this opportunity, national anti-vaccine groups became aggressive evangelizers, and their messaging has taken hold in communities that Omer says share several common traits, such as having strong values of purity (either secular or religious) and liberty – a combination of “my body is a temple” and “you can’t tell me what to do”.

An outbreak becomes likely when these groups – which are often tight knit and insular – have frequent outside exposures, particularly through travel. For example, a measles outbreak occurred among the Ohio Amish community when two unvaccinated members contracted the virus while visiting the Philippines (reports conflict as to whether the trip was for [charitable](#) or [missionary](#) purposes).

Experts interviewed for this article weren’t sure when vaccine hesitancy initially emerged in the Rockland Orthodox community. The first organized action appears to have been a phone hotline through which anti-vaccine activists “would promote a lot of misinformation” to parents with questions about vaccination, says Dorit Reiss, a professor at the University of California Hastings College of Law.

The movement gained traction in the mid-2010s with the publication of the Vaccine Safety Handbook, put out by an anti-vaccine group called Parents Educating and Advocating for Children’s Health. Commonly known as the Peach pamphlet, the material was distributed to Jewish communities throughout New York and into Pittsburgh.

The handbook promotes standard anti-vaccine messaging, but “everything has a Jewish flavor to it,” says Miriam Knoll, co-founder and chief executive of the Jewish Orthodox Women’s Medical Association (Jowma). “It used a lot of Jewish wording and ideas to make things up about [vaccines].”

No one knows who funded the effort or why, although Reiss says Barbara Loe Fisher, head of the National Vaccine Information Center (the country’s oldest anti-vaccine organization), and Moishe Kahan, a member of the local Orthodox community who sells supplements, were among the names credited with writing the handbook. “This is a collaboration between local anti-vaccine activists and the National Vaccine Information Center, and it’s a very misleading pamphlet,” says Reiss.

The consequences of the campaign became clear in 2018 when an unvaccinated child contracted the virus on a trip to Israel and triggered a measles outbreak in New York. Israel has a high national vaccination rate (upwards of 97%), but some Orthodox communities in the country have also absorbed anti-vaccine messaging. Measles and polio outbreaks – including the current one – have occurred simultaneously in both countries.

The New York [measles outbreak](#) ultimately affected 649 people, 93% of whom were Orthodox Jews. The situation attracted national attention and intensified campaigns from both sides of the issue. Rallies held in [Rockland](#) and [Brooklyn](#) in 2019 featured Andrew Wakefield, the disgraced British scientist who started the fraudulent claim that vaccines cause autism, and former Hollywood producer Del Bigtree, who directed the documentary Vaxxed: From Cover-Up To Catastrophe and is now chief executive of the anti-vaccination group Informed Consent Action Network.

In response, a group of Orthodox Jewish nurses formed Emes, which stands for Engaging in Medical Education with Sensitivity, and also means “truth” in Yiddish. They put out a [rebuttal](#) to the Peach handbook entitled “A Slice of Pie: Parents Informed and Educated”. A local Orthodox businessman also funded a [pamphlet](#), printed in English and Yiddish, that quoted prominent Orthodox rabbis explaining how the Torah supports vaccination. The state of New York stepped in too, officially removing the religious exemption to school vaccine mandates in 2019.

Thanks to these types of efforts, public health groups started “making progress” in counteracting anti-vaccine sentiments across the country, Omer says. But then the Covid pandemic hit.

Recent data revealed that [childhood vaccination rates have declined](#) worldwide since 2020 – the biggest backslide in 30 years. The reason is probably twofold: first, reduced access to routine pediatric appointments disrupted vaccination schedules, particularly in east Asian and Pacific nations. Second, at least in the US, growing distrust of government public health agencies and the spread of anti-vaccine talking points has taken a toll.

Knoll says that, anecdotally, physicians who serve the Orthodox Jewish community are seeing parents who “were never anti-vax, always vaccinated their kids with all routine pediatric vaccines, but now with their younger kids, they’re very hesitant to vaccinate. Why? Because of distrust sowed through the pandemic.”

However, she also says that the paralyzed young man in Rockland appears to have served as a wake-up call for many parents. A Jowma colleague of Knoll’s who works in Rockland county reported that in the past week, “half of her patients were people who came in for a polio vaccine”.

Knoll says that when asked why they didn’t come in sooner, the parents’ most common response was: “It just wasn’t a priority.” But once they heard about the case, “they got scared, so they came in.”

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HEADLINE	08/29 Ukraine war depletes US ammo stockpiles
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-war-depleting-u-s-ammunition-stockpiles-sparking-pentagon-concern-11661792188?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The war in Ukraine has depleted American stocks of some types of ammunition and the Pentagon has been slow to replenish its arsenal, sparking concerns among U.S. officials that American military readiness could be jeopardized by the shortage.</p> <p>The U.S. has during the past six months supplied Ukraine with 16 U.S. rocket launchers, known as Himars, thousands of guns, drones, missiles and other equipment. Much of that, including ammunition, has come directly from U.S. inventory, depleting stockpiles intended for unexpected threats, defense officials say.</p>

One of the most lethal weapons the Pentagon has sent are howitzers that fire high-explosive 155mm ammunition weighing about 100 pounds each and able to accurately hit targets dozens of miles away. As of Aug. 24, the U.S. military said it had provided Ukraine with up to 806,000 rounds of 155mm ammunition. The U.S. military has declined to say how many rounds it had at the start of the year.

In recent weeks, the level of 155mm combat rounds in U.S. military storage have become “uncomfortably low,” one defense official said. The levels aren’t yet critical because the U.S. isn’t engaged in any major military conflict, the official added. “It is not at the level we would like to go into combat,” the defense official said.

The U.S. military used a howitzer as recently as last week to strike at [Iranian-backed groups in Syria](#), and the depletion of 155mm ammunition is increasingly concerning for a military that seeks to plan for any scenario.

The Army said the military is now conducting “an ammunitions industrial base deep dive” to determine how to support Ukraine while protecting “our own supply needs.” The Army said it also asked Capitol Hill for \$500 million a year in upgrade efforts for the Army’s ammunition plants. Meanwhile, the service is relying on existing contracts to increase production of ammunition, but it hasn’t signed new contracts to account for the higher amounts it will need to replenish its stocks, according to Army officials.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark Milley has been conducting monthly reviews of the U.S. arsenal to determine whether the readiness levels are still appropriate given the needs for the ammunition in Ukraine, according to U.S. military officials. The U.S. last week provided Ukraine with a different size howitzer ammunition, 105mm, a reflection, in part, of the concern about its stocks of 155mm ammunition, the officials said.

The looming ammunition shortage isn’t for lack of funds, according to those familiar with the issue. The U.S. announced this week that it was setting aside nearly \$3 billion for long-term aid [intended to help Ukraine](#), bringing the total spent on weaponry for the country to \$14 billion, and the Biden administration’s Pentagon budget request for next year is \$773 billion.

“This was knowable. It was foreseeable. It was forewarned, including from industry leaders to the Pentagon. And it was easily fixable,” said Mackenzie Eaglen, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a think tank in Washington.

What is needed, she said, is for the government to spend money to fix the problem.

“There are some problems you can buy your way out of,” she said. “This is one of them.”

The Pentagon’s buying process generally starts with the military determining its requirements, which are then reviewed and then bids solicited from the private sector. But since [Russia’s invasion of Ukraine](#) in February, industry officials have complained that the Pentagon hasn’t always communicated those requirements, which often change, creating delays, and leaving defense contractors unable to prepare for more production.

Dormant supply lines often can’t be switched on overnight, and surging production of active lines can take time. Companies are already producing 155mm ammunition, but not at the capacity yet that the Pentagon will need to replenish its stocks.

In the U.S., it takes 13 to 18 months from the time orders are placed for munitions to be manufactured, according to an industry official. Replenishing stockpiles of more sophisticated weaponry such as missiles and drones can take much longer.

Even a yearlong delay is a problem precisely because ammunition shortages can pop up quickly given the rate they can be drawn down in a conflict.

	<p>“Nations assume the risk that war is not going to take place, and have the assumption they can react when they need to,” said Brad Martin, director of the Institute for Supply Chain Security at the Rand Corp. “It simply might not be true that you can ramp up” production quickly, he added.</p> <p>Defense and congressional officials familiar with the issue attribute the looming shortage to a number of factors. The Pentagon’s bureaucracy has been slow to provide new contracts to replenish its stocks and has been reluctant to share its long-term needs with industry.</p> <p>They also attribute part of the problem to the lack of coordination between part of the Pentagon that works to quickly supply Ukraine with weapons and the bureaucracy responsible for buying equipment. “The contracting process is much slower than the drawdown, and there is just not a lot you can do about that,” one congressional staffer said.</p> <p>Speaking on an earnings call July 19, Jim Taiclet, chief executive of Lockheed Martin Corp., said the Pentagon has yet to put the contracts in place or coordinate with industry to buy more supplies, a process that often takes two to three years.</p> <p>The Defense Department needs to “shift gears” if it wants industry to prepare for more orders, he said. “And I can tell you the clutch isn’t engaged yet.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 National Cinema Day: \$3 movie tickets
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/national-cinema-day/507-c21f4184-ca16-47ed-9032-2c96808624cb
GIST	<p>NEW YORK — For one day, movie tickets will be just \$3 in the vast majority of American theaters as part of a newly launched “National Cinema Day” to lure moviegoers during a quiet spell at the box office.</p> <p>The Cinema Foundation, a non-profit arm of the National Association of Theater Owners, on Sunday announced that Sept. 3 will be a nationwide discount day in more than 3,000 theaters and on more than 30,000 screens. Major chains, including AMC and Regal Cinemas, are participating, as are all major film studios. In participating theaters, tickets will be no more than \$3 for every showing, in every format.</p> <p>Labor Day weekend is traditionally one of the slowest weekends in theaters. This year, the August lull has been especially acute for exhibitors. Cineworld, which owns Regal Cinemas, cited the scant supply of major new releases in its recent plans to fill for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.</p> <p>But, if successful, National Cinema Day could flood theaters with moviegoers and potentially prompt them to return in the fall. Before each showing, ticket buyers will be shown a sizzle reel of upcoming films from A24, Amazon Studios, Disney, Focus Features, Lionsgate, Neon, Paramount, Sony Pictures Classics, Sony, United Artists Releasing, Universal, and Warner Bros.</p> <p>"After this summer’s record-breaking return to cinemas, we wanted to do something to celebrate moviegoing,” said Jackie Brenneman, Cinema Foundation president, in a statement. “We’re doing it by offering a ‘thank you’ to the moviegoers that made this summer happen, and by offering an extra enticement for those who haven’t made it back yet.”</p> <p>After more than two years of pandemic, movie theaters rebounded significantly over the summer, seeing business return to nearly pre-pandemic levels. Films like “Top Gun: Maverick,” “Minions: Rise of Gru,” “Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness” and “Jurassic World Dominion” pushed the domestic summer box office to \$3.3 billion in ticket sales as of Aug. 21, according to data firm Comscore. That trails 2019 totals by about 20% but exhibitors have had about 30% fewer wide releases this year.</p> <p>Organizers of National Cinema Day described the event as a trial that could become an annual fixture. While some other countries have experimented with a similar day of cheap movie tickets, the initiative is the first of its kind on such a large scale in the U.S.</p>

HEADLINE	08/29 Backlog of teachers awaiting certification
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/backlog-teacher-applicants-waiting-certification-school-districts-struggle-hire/O5S7RY4E2VACDC3EZ2XOYJMQKM/
GIST	<p>The teacher shortage in America has hit crisis levels, as thousands of potential educators in Washington state are awaiting certification. Local district sources tell KIRO-7 that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has a capacity issue, arguing that the state agency isn't staffed appropriately and needs to reallocate resources.</p> <p>There are roughly 3,700 applicants in the pipeline right now, educators who are ready and willing to teach. But they may not get their certification in the time for the fall semester.</p> <p>KIRO 7's Lauren Donovan obtained an email correspondence between a teaching applicant and OSPI's Professional Certification Customer Service Team. It reads in part, "The Professional Certification Office is currently experiencing an unprecedented number of calls and emails."</p> <p>Cindy Rockholt is OSPI's Assistant Superintendent of Educator Growth and Development. Part of Rockholt's job is to oversee the certification process.</p> <p>"The number of certificates we're processing right now are not that different than the number processed last year and the year before," said Rockholt.</p> <p>According to the assistant superintendent, the summer days between June 30 when certificates expire and the start of fall classes is what they call "crunchtime."</p> <p>"We have the most applications coming in and the issue to renew certificates is the greatest," said Rockholt.</p> <p>The email also states: "We know that some of you are worried that you will not receive your certification renewals in order to start work in the fall."</p> <p>Rockholt says not just anyone can approve teaching applications. The state has a team of eight. That's eight people processing the backlog of 3,700 applications this week. She says the office is looking to hire a ninth member.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Fed up Ballard residents take back streets
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/ballard-residents-are-taking-back-their-street-moving-heavy-planters-in-to-keep-rvs-out
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Frustrated and fed up.</p> <p>Some Ballard residents are taking back their street.</p> <p>Literally.</p> <p>They've moved in heavy planters to keep RVs and campers from moving in.</p> <p>Even though it's a clear violation - some residents say it's a risk they're willing to take, but that's not the case for everyone.</p> <p>A cluster of round planter containers on 8th avenue NW in Ballard seemed to just appear.</p>

We asked folks who live and work around the area, and no one seems to know how they got here, but they know why they're there..

Farther south on 8th Avenue we found another grouping of planters.

David, who didn't want to share his last name, but rents a house along 8th Avenue said he put three stainless steel planters on his street and filled them with gravel.

"Still not sure it's the right decision but it's worth it to me right now."

He insists he didn't take the decision lightly, tried to get help from various city departments and out of necessity bought and placed the planters.

He admits it's to keep encampment RVs out.

"If we hadn't done anything we'd have the same problem again it took us over 4 months to solve that," said David.

For four months a large RV and camper never moved outside his home, they were parked right next to his bedroom window.

He said a loud generator ran all day and night, people coming and going, feces, drug use and his biggest fear - the fire risk.

"At the end of the day, it's dangerous, if that environment comes back it's dangerous, they (RVs) can catch on fire, all kinds of things that go on that you can't even express the frustration when you are so worried about everything out of your control," said David, "The frustration of trying to get through to city officials, parking enforcement to take any action was beyond frustrations that I have ever had."

He estimates the RV next to his home got tagged dozens of times with repeated parking citations - then after it was abandoned for three days, he said the RV was impounded. That was in May - and that's when David said he moved the planters in.

"I helped fill those planters with gravel," said Mark, David's neighbor.

Mark insists the RV created another danger, a blind corner for other drivers. "I was worried someone would get killed."

After months of no change, he was thrilled to see the RV being towed away, but up until that point, he felt as if no one in city hall was listening.

"I feel like I'm being told I just have to suck it up and live with this," said David, who insists until the city comes up with a holistic systemic solution - they'll do what they have to.

"I know there are a lot of people are working on this and I'm not naive enough to say that it's not a complex social problem," said Mark.

It's not legal to place the planters on the street like David has, the city says most items require a permit, and the city doesn't issue permits for this kind of use.

Planters, and in addition to them, as we've reported, eco-blocks - heavy concrete blocks - may not be the only issue the city may be facing.

Now comes, possibly a new attempt to stop parking.

	<p>We noticed 'no parking signs' along 8th avenue NW that were chained and padlocked to nearby posts, from stop signs to street signs. We counted at least three of them. We showed some of the photos to the city.</p> <p>SDOT told KOMO News while it's not typical, it's not illegal to chain up and padlock a no-parking sign.</p> <p>But, SDOT noticed the dates on one of the no parking signs did not match the date on the permit posted with it. SDOT said if the dates don't match the no parking is not enforceable.</p> <p>A spokesperson says SDOT plans to visit the location to investigate.</p> <p>"It means people are so at the end of their line they are going to do anything," said David.</p> <p>Violators can face a citation and fine, but so far SDOT says it's just issued warnings and prefers to educate business and property owners to remove them.</p> <p>Often it's difficult for the city to identify who placed them and the city says potential violations are complaint-driven.</p> <p>So far SDOT has issued 32 warnings between about two dozen businesses and property owners over the last year.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Seattle average gas price drops to \$4.89/gal
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/average-price-of-gas-in-seattle-is-down-354-cents-a-gallon-from-a-month-ago-per-gasbuddy
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The average price of gas in Seattle dropped 1.8 cents per gallon over the past week, bringing the city's average to \$4.89, according to GasBuddy's survey of 775 stations in the Emerald City.</p> <p>That average is 35.4 cents lower than a month ago and 89.6 cents higher than a year ago.</p> <p>The national average price of diesel has risen 7.3 cents in the last week and stands at \$5.04 per gallon, according to GasBuddy.</p> <p>According to GasBuddy, the cheapest gas in Seattle on Sunday was \$3.93 per gallon, while the most expensive was \$5.79 per gallon. The cheapest gas in Washington state was \$3.84 per gallon and the highest was \$5.79.</p> <p>Nationally, gas prices dropped an average of 5 cents per gallon since last week.</p> <p>Tacoma (\$4.59 per gallon, unchanged from last week), Yakima (\$4.49, down 4.9 cents) and Washington state (\$4.68, down 3.5 cents) all saw similar trends.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Kitsap fire chiefs decry long hospital waits
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/kitsap-fire-chiefs-complain-st-michael-medical-center-keeps-ambulances-patients-waiting-too-long
GIST	<p>SILVERDALE, Wash. - First responders in Kitsap County are sounding the alarm, hoping the public and elected leaders take note after firefighters noticed patients having to wait inside ambulances for too long—sometimes for several hours—before they are admitted to the emergency room.</p> <p>Fire department chiefs say that while their EMT's are waiting in Silverdale for patients to be admitted to St. Michael Medical Center, they cannot respond to other calls in their jurisdiction</p>

There are interagency agreements for all six fire fighting agencies that have been picking up the slack when backups at St. Michael Medical Center are bad, but fire department chiefs want this problem fixed.

"One of our units was there for 3 hours and 54 minutes," said Chief Hank Teran from Bainbridge Island Fire Department.

Teran said the delays impact his community in ways that neglect firefighter and community training, and more.

"I've never seen a situation I've seen right now, where our units are waiting this long in the emergency room," Teran said.

It's not only [Bainbridge Island](#)— the five other fire departments in Kitsap County shared similar concerns about ambulance wait times at the hospital.

"This is uncharted," said Chief Jeff Faucett of [South Kitsap Fire and Rescue](#).

Faucett is also the chair of [Kitsap County EMS](#) and says his and other departments have been meeting with St. Michael Medical Center officials to iron out a fix.

Nurses in the North Sound are sounding the alarm with elected leaders, warning too many in their field are getting burned out and open positions are not being filled quickly enough to make up for it.

St. Michael Medical Center officials say an [extremely high capacity and staffing shortages are partially to blame](#) for the backups. When patients at the hospital are ready to be discharged, there isn't space at post-care facilities either, officials said.

Hospital president Chad Melton shared a statement with FOX 13 News that reads, in part:
"We are utilizing our mission control command center and working to ease strain through various strategies to ensure we can care for all our patients."

Both first responders and St. Michael Medical Center officials vow to continue working to find solutions, but firefighters [don't want the public to see ambulances backed up and choose instead to avoid calling for help](#).

"We don't want people to second guess when they call 911," said Faucett. "If they need to go to ED (emergency department), they need to do that."

To avoid further backups, the Kitsap County Fire Chief's association says emergency responders now have new operating procedures.

The directive says when there are more than 2 ambulances waiting at St. Michael Medical Center longer than 45 minutes, new patients with non-life-threatening issues could be diverted to another facility for care if they agree to a transfer.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Political chaos grips Iraq; deadly violence
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/29/world/middleeast/iraq-sadr-politics.html
GIST	<p>Iraq sank deeper into political chaos on Monday after the influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr announced he was retiring from politics and at least 12 of his supporters were shot and killed by government security forces while protesting in the capital, Baghdad.</p> <p>Mr. Sadr's pronouncement on Twitter sent hundreds of his followers into the streets of Baghdad, where they breached concrete barriers guarding the so-called Green Zone, the site of Parliament, Iraqi government offices and diplomatic missions, including the U.S. Embassy.</p>

At least 12 protesters were killed and more than 100 were injured when security forces fired on them, according to two Iraqi officials who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue. Baghdad and most provinces were under curfew by Monday evening. The Associated Press later reported that at least 15 protesters had been killed by gunfire, citing a senior medical official.

A senior aide to Mr. Sadr, Hassan al-Adhari, said late on Monday that the Shiite cleric was declaring that he would go on a hunger strike until “the violence and use of weapons stops.”

Although political turmoil and street protests are common in Iraq, Monday’s developments — with a combustible mix of inter-Shiite divisions and the breaching of state institutions, along with political deadlock — could mark an even more dangerous phase.

Iraq has been without a new government since [elections last October](#), when candidates loyal to Mr. Sadr won the single biggest bloc of seats and eclipsed rival Shiite political parties backed by Iran. That has left the country with a caretaker government that has not been able to address urgent economic problems, such as passing an annual budget, among other priorities.

Mr. Sadr, whose militia fought U.S. troops during the American occupation of Iraq, comes from a family of revered clerics and is Iraq’s most influential Shiite religious figure involved in politics. In the midst of disagreements with other parties over who should be president and prime minister, he threw the process of forming a government into turmoil in June when he ordered newly elected members of Parliament loyal to him [to resign](#).

Leaders in the Sadr movement, in a show of force in July, directed his followers to storm Parliament and then set up a tent camp that has blockaded the Parliament building for more than a month, preventing lawmakers from meeting.

Mr. Sadr has had an uneasy relationship with Iran, and if his vow to quit politics stands it could pave the way for his Iranian-backed rivals to form the nucleus of a new government. His ability to mobilize hundreds of thousands of followers throughout Shiite-majority Iraq means he could also engineer protests that would threaten any new government if he wishes.

On Monday, protesters for the first time during the recent unrest stormed the Republican Palace, Saddam Hussein’s former residence, which later served as the headquarters of the U.S.-led occupation and now hosts Iraqi cabinet meetings. Video posted on social media showed some of the protesters stripping off to their underwear and jumping in the palace pool.

“Today, the people are controlling the Green Zone,” says the narrator, who appears to be on a diving board.

Some international organizations were conducting evacuation flights from the Green Zone by helicopter to Baghdad’s international airport.

Stéphane Dujarric, a spokesman for the secretary general of the United Nations, António Guterres, said that he was alarmed by the developments.

“He appeals for calm and restraint,” he said of Mr. Guterres, adding that the U.N. leader was calling for “immediate steps to de-escalate the situation and avoid any violence.”

Security forces closed roads south of the capital, preventing more protesters from arriving from southern provinces that are Sadr strongholds. One of those provinces, Dhi Qar, announced all government offices would be closed Tuesday because of security concerns.

Iraqi security forces include members of Iran-backed paramilitaries not directly under the control of the government. Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi said the use of live fire by security forces was banned and he was launching an investigation into the shootings.

Security forces also used tear gas and water cannons against protesters in the Green Zone.

Neighboring Iran announced it was closing all land borders with Iraq until further notice and warned citizens not to travel to Iraq, saying the country was working to return Iranian visitors home safely. Tehran's international airport suspended flights to Baghdad. Millions of Iranian pilgrims travel to Iraq every year to visit historic shrines at the heart of Shiite Muslim identity.

At least two of those killed were shot dead near the home of a former prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, according to the senior security official.

Mr. Maliki is locked in a bitter rivalry with Mr. Sadr and the shootings near his home illustrated the dangers of the increasing factionalization of Iraqi Shiite parties. Mr. Maliki is part of an Iran-backed political bloc that has also vied to form a government. His sectarian policies while in power are widely blamed for having fostered the rise of the terrorist group Islamic State.

Hours after security forces opened fire on protesters approaching Mr. Maliki's home, witnesses reported more gunfire.

Mr. Sadr has mobilized much larger gatherings of followers in the streets in recent weeks to protest against government corruption and foreign interference in Iraq.

Mr. Sadr said in his statement he was also closing all institutions linked to the Sadrists except for the tomb of his father, Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, who was assassinated while Saddam Hussein was in power, and other offices related to the family's religious heritage.

"I have decided not to interfere in political affairs so now I announce my final retirement," Mr. Sadr wrote on Twitter.

Mr. al-Kadhimi, the prime minister, said he was suspending cabinet sessions until further notice. In an appeal to Mr. Sadr, he said perpetuating political disputes "to the point of damaging all state institutions does not serve the Iraqi people, their aspirations, their future and their territorial integrity."

Mr. Sadr has said several times before that he was leaving politics and even temporarily suspended his political activities and closed his movement's offices, prompting questions about whether this latest move could be a tactic to eventually strengthen his negotiating position in the now-paralyzed efforts to form a government.

"He repeatedly says he's not going to be part of politics and then inevitably comes back in," said Sajad Jiyad, an Iraq-based fellow at the Century Foundation, a U.S.-based think tank. "Maybe this is a way of giving breathing space to all sides."

Mr. Sadr is known as an Iraqi nationalist. He had been trying to form a new government with Sunni Arab and Kurdish partners before those monthslong negotiations failed.

The resignation and the appearance of his followers in the streets could also be "a means to exert pressure and have people beg him to roll back his decision," said Elie Abouaoun, a director at the United States Institute of Peace.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Deadly floods devastate fragile Pakistan
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/29/climate/pakistan-floods-monsoon.html

Across Pakistan, torrents of floodwater have ripped away mountainsides, swept buildings off their foundations and roared through the countryside, turning whole districts into inland seas. More than 1,100 people have died so far, and more than one million homes have been damaged or destroyed.

After nearly three months of incessant rain, much of Pakistan's farmland is now underwater, raising the specter of food shortages in what is likely to be the most destructive monsoon season in the country's recent history.

"We are using boats, camels, whatever means possible to deliver relief items to worst-hit areas," said Faisal Amin Khan, a minister in the mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which has been severely affected. "We're trying our best, but our province was hit worse now than in the 2010 floods."

That year, flooding killed more than 1,700 people and left millions homeless. At the time, the secretary-general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, described the disaster as the [worst he had ever seen](#).

The crisis unfolding this summer is the latest extreme weather event in a country often ranked as one of the most vulnerable to climate change. Pakistan this spring began experiencing record-breaking, drought-intensifying heat, which [scientists concluded](#) had been 30 times as likely to occur because of human-caused global warming. Now much of the country is underwater.

While scientists can't yet say how much the current rainfall and flooding may have been worsened by climate change, researchers agree that in South Asia and elsewhere, global warming is increasing the likelihood of severe rain. When it falls in an area also grappling with drought, it can be particularly damaging by causing [sharp swings](#) between far too little water and far too much, too quickly.

"If that rainfall was distributed over the season, maybe it wouldn't be that bad," said Deepti Singh, a climate scientist at Washington State University Vancouver. Instead, strong cloudbursts are ruining crops and washing away infrastructure, with huge consequences for vulnerable societies, she said. "Our systems are just not designed to manage that."

Pakistan is already beset by skyrocketing food prices as well as political instability, leaving the country's government shaky precisely when leadership is most critical. The former prime minister, Imran Khan, was forced out of office in April and this month was [charged under antiterrorism laws](#) amid a power struggle with the current leadership.

In the port city of Karachi, Afzal Ali, a 35-year-old garment-factory worker who earns just over \$100 a month, said on Monday that prices for basic food items like tomatoes had quadrupled in the past few days since the rains intensified again. "Everything has already become expensive because of rising petrol prices, and the recent floods will further worsen the situation," he said.

On Monday, Pakistan's finance minister, Miftah Ismail, was quoted by local news agencies as saying that the floods and accompanying increases in food prices could lead the government to reopen certain trade routes to India to ease supply issues despite persistent tensions between the two countries.

India itself has been so hard-hit by drought this year that it has dramatically decreased its food exports. That decision deepened fears of a prolonged global food crisis, spurred in part by huge reductions in wheat and fertilizer supply after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a major wheat producer.

Pakistan's compounding economic and political crises — exacerbated by pandemic-era economic sluggishness and a weakening currency — will be further entrenched by this year's floods. Ahsan Iqbal, the country's planning minister, said he estimated damages to exceed \$10 billion and that it will take the better part of a decade for the nation to rebuild.

Sherry Rehman, Pakistan's climate change minister, called the flooding a "climate-induced humanitarian disaster" of "epic proportions" and appealed for international aid. Only around \$50 million is allocated to

Pakistan's climate change ministry in this year's budget, reflecting a cut of almost one third as the government tries to curtail spending.

One business owner hopeful for government assistance was Muhammad Saad Khan, owner of the Riverdale Resort, a hotel along the steep banks of the Swat River in the Hindu Kush mountains near the border with Afghanistan. The hotel's parking lot and part of its main building were swept away over the weekend.

"The flow of the river was so high that the water gushed into the rooms even though the hotel is constructed away from the river and at a height," he said. "And we were actually the lucky ones."

Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority said 162 bridges had so far been damaged by this year's floods and that more than 2,000 miles of roads were washed away. Abrar ul Haq, chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent, said that the mixture of flooding and high temperatures meant the "worst is yet to come" because conditions were perfect for the spread of waterborne diseases.

Pakistan's low levels of resilience and repeated need for disaster aid are not just matters of weak governance but of historical injustices, some argue. A long-running debate over the obligations of rich, polluting nations to help poor, developing countries cope with climate change has become a sticking point in global climate negotiations.

Countries like Pakistan are far less industrialized than wealthier nations like the United States or Britain, which colonized Pakistan. As a result, over time Pakistan and other countries have emitted only a tiny fraction of the greenhouse gases that are warming the world, yet they suffer outsized damage and are also expected to pay for costly modernization to limit their current pollution.

"Any flood relief that is given should not be seen as 'aid,' but rather as reparations for injustices accumulated over the past few centuries," said Nida Kirmani, a professor of sociology at the Lahore School for Management Sciences.

The summer monsoon is central to life in South Asia, where a relatively reliable rainy season is essential for agriculture to thrive across a region of well over one billion people. But scientists expect more of these seasonal rains to come down in dangerous, unpredictable bursts as the planet continues to heat up, largely for the simple reason that warmer air holds more moisture.

When the right atmospheric factors come together to generate heavy precipitation, there is more water available to fall from the clouds than there had been before greenhouse-gas emissions began warming the planet, said Noah S. Diffenbaugh, a climate scientist at Stanford University who has studied the South Asian monsoon.

This is true even though average precipitation at the height of the rainy season over central India, which scientists call the monsoon "core," declined somewhat between 1951 and 2011, Dr. Diffenbaugh and his colleagues found in a [2014 study](#). The reason for this apparent "paradox," he said, is that the monsoon has become more erratic: Stronger downpours have been interspersed with longer dry spells. Instead of the steady rains that reliably nourish crops, more precipitation comes intermittently.

In the process, extreme swings between dry periods and deluges can become part of a broader cycle of social and economic pressures.

"The floods are devastating, yes, and affect a lot of people in a short amount of time," said Jumaina Siddiqui, the senior program officer for South Asia at the United States Institute for Peace. "But drought, food security, inflation — these are climate-related disasters that are playing out broadly, before, during and after these floods."

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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/behind-seattle-fires-record-overtime-staffing-shortfalls-lead-to-extreme-hours/
GIST	<p>Last Christmas Eve, Seattle firefighter Daniel Kieta clocked in to work a 24-hour shift. He worked another 24 hours the next day, and after a day's rest, put in a second 48-hour shift, logging 130 hours — all overtime — in the final week of the year.</p> <p>It was the most extreme week for Kieta, who worked the most hours of any city employee last year. But it was not an anomaly for the 51-year-old firefighter, or for the Seattle Fire Department.</p> <p>SFD paid out \$37.7 million in overtime last year, a 49% increase over 2019 and the most in department history, as it grappled with an uptick in emergencies, shouldered a broader workload and lost firefighters. The department says “unprecedented staffing shortages” are continuing.</p> <p>SFD responded to more calls last year with fewer staff than in 2019, a 6% increase in the number of responses per firefighter. The department's uniformed staff slipped to 965 in June — the lowest level going back to at least 2001, department records show — before rebounding with new hires.</p> <p>Citywide, ranked by the number of hours they were paid to work, the top 30 city employees were all firefighters. The top 10 worked more than 4,000 hours — equivalent to working two years of 40-hour work weeks within the span of one year — while Kieta logged more than 4,900 hours, making him the 15th highest-paid city employee at \$341,410. The highest wage earner was fire Capt. Rory Dees, 64, who put in more than 4,300 hours and grossed \$405,020.</p> <p>“We do have concerns all the time about individuals working too much overtime, too many hours in a row,” Harold Scoggins, the fire department's chief, said in an interview. “We won't be able to solve this until we can get our staffing all the way full,” he said, adding that he is “incredibly proud” of firefighters who have stepped up to work overtime</p> <p>The greater workload doesn't appear to have contributed to slower response times or a higher rate of injury, according to department data. But at times last year, the department did not meet staffing minimums and couldn't operate some fire engines or other units, Scoggins said. On three days in December, staffing was so low at a station in Beacon Hill that it placed its engine out of service and only a battalion chief was available to respond.</p> <p>The department did not make Kieta or Dees available for interviews for this story.</p> <p>“I have continued to go above and beyond to fulfill my duty as a public servant for the Seattle community during a time where it's been needed most,” Dees said in a statement, adding that it hasn't been easy on his family. “For all of us who have worked overtime, I think I speak collectively in that we feel we have made a positive difference by helping to respond to our residents' fire and medical emergencies.”</p> <p>Much of the increased overtime has been driven by COVID-19. SFD staffers provided more than 230,000 vaccines last year, at sites from pop-up clinics to Mariners and Sounders games, and administered more than 250,000 tests.</p> <p>The department has had to plug gaps resulting from the dozens of firefighters who left the department or took leave in the fourth quarter of 2021 because they did not comply with the city's vaccine requirement.</p> <p>According to SFD, 44 firefighters retired, 10 resigned and 21 were fired from the department in the nine months following the announcement of the vaccine requirement. As of May, another 19 were on extended leave from the department, seeking exemptions from the policy.</p> <p>While the department does not have data on why each firefighter left, a spokesperson said “there is one retirement that clearly related to the mandate,” and that “some additional retirements may have occurred in response to the mandate, although the retirees did not explicitly state such reason.”</p>

Other temporary stressors — like a six-person team staffing a truck and medic unit added in West Seattle in June 2020 to respond to emergencies during the closure of the West Seattle Bridge — contributed to the number of hours worked. But the department is also understaffed for its daily operations.

At different points throughout the day, SFD requires between 216 and 220 uniformed personnel to be on duty in order to meet minimum staffing requirements. The department says it needs 1,083 personnel in total to meet full staffing.

As of this month, SFD said it had 1,026 uniformed staff, or 57 positions shy of full staffing. The department said they've met minimum staffing requirements just 32% of the time since the beginning of the year. On days when SFD is understaffed, anywhere from one to "a few" of the department's 69 apparatuses can be out of service, according to a spokesperson.

"As a result of normal and expected retirements and the failure of the department to hire enough fire fighters over the last few years, the Seattle Fire Department is extremely understaffed," International Association of Fire Fighters Local 27 President Kenny Stuart said in a written statement.

"On a daily basis our firefighters and paramedics are being asked to work extra shifts to cover these vacancies to ensure that the people of Seattle are protected at all times, and they are doing just that," he added.

Before Scoggins took over as chief in 2015, the department intentionally kept open some vacancies, believing that it was more cost-effective to the city to have firefighters work overtime than bringing on more full-time employees. Overtime pay can also have longer-term [financial consequences](#), as it is included in firefighters' [compensation](#) that counts toward their pensions.

After more than a decade of hiring an average of 25 recruits a year, the department has expanded its hiring in recent years. SFD has hired 124 recruits this year, though the new hires must attend a 15-plus-week academy and complete a nine-month probationary period before they become sworn firefighters.

According to Scoggins, there is no shortage of prospective recruits applying, but the department has struggled to grow the academies to train larger class sizes and keep up with the number of firefighters quitting or retiring from the department.

"We are an organization in transition from one generation to the next," Scoggins said, noting that the department has hired around 400 new firefighters in his seven years as chief.

Department and union officials are projecting severe staff shortages for months to come. In July, SFD and the union agreed to a temporary plan to deal with the shortages, including allowing probationary employees to work overtime under certain conditions and firefighters to work 72-hour shifts.

Generally, firefighters must have 24 hours of rest before and after they work a 48-hour shift where they are responding to emergencies, according to SFD.

A Seattle Times analysis of overtime data found that 10 firefighters worked 48-hour shifts without 24 hours off on 36 occasions last year. In reviewing those instances, the department determined that most of those shifts were allowable because firefighters were working "non-operations overtime," such as sporting events or administering vaccines. SFD said Kieta's shifts likely violated the rule on four occasions, which it hadn't been aware of previously.

SFD has faced similar staffing numbers in the last decade. In 2014, the department reported slightly fewer uniformed staff than in 2021, though it also responded to fewer calls. The department reached its busiest period in 2016, when it responded to more than 97,000 emergencies — which worked out to a rate of responses per firefighter slightly higher than last year.

	<p>A department spokesperson pointed to a range of changes in recent years, such as city policies increasing employee leave and staffing for more special events like Kraken hockey games. SFD also launched the Health One program, which is staffed by firefighters, to respond to calls that could involve medical or mental health needs but aren't full-fledged emergencies.</p> <p>For some firefighters, working at a busy station is a kind of badge of honor. Station 25 in Capitol Hill, which traces its roots to the department's charter in 1889, is home to Aid Car 25 — the ambulance that responds to more calls than any other unit in the city.</p> <p>A25, as it is known, responded to 5,272 calls last year, up 12% from 2020, an average of more than 14 emergencies a day. The ambulance is parked underneath a disco ball, a whimsical nod to the neighborhood's vibrant nightlife and the station's around-the-clock work.</p> <p>Firefighters there are often rushing out before the fire bell sounds, attuned to listen for a faint click that happens a split-second before the emergency lights switch on.</p> <p>"We've always been one of the busiest houses in the city, and we'll always be busy," said Tobin Graves, a lieutenant who has worked at the station since 1999. "Years ago..." he said, beginning a sentence he never finished as he rushed out the door to a call.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Russia confounds West by its oil riches
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-confounds-the-west-by-recapturing-its-oil-riches-11661781928?mod=hp_lead_pos4
GIST	<p>Russia pumps almost as much oil into the global market as it did before its invasion of Ukraine. With oil prices up, Moscow is also making more money.</p> <p>Demand from some of the world's largest economies has given Russian President Vladimir Putin the upper hand in the energy battle that shadows the war in Ukraine, and has confounded the West's bid to cripple Russia's economy with sanctions.</p> <p>Sales are booming in Russia's export market, the world's largest in crude and refined fuels. And new trade arrangements have given Mr. Putin cover to use natural gas exports as an economic weapon against Ukraine's European allies. Before the war, Russia supplied Europe with 40% of its gas. It has since throttled flows through the Nord Stream pipeline to Germany and other conduits, driving prices higher and putting pressure on European households and businesses.</p> <p>Oil revenue more than makes up the difference. "Russia is swimming in cash," said Elina Ribakova, deputy chief economist at the Institute of International Finance. Moscow earned \$97 billion from oil and gas sales through July this year, about \$74 billion of that from oil, she said.</p> <p>The country exported 7.4 million barrels of crude and products such as diesel and gasoline each day in July, according to the International Energy Agency, down only about 600,000 barrels a day since the start of the year.</p> <p>Even with the dip in oil exports, Russia has earned \$20 billion in average monthly sales this year compared with a \$14.6 billion monthly average in 2021, when economies were recovering from the pandemic crash. Shipments were rising again in August, data from ship-tracking firm Vortexa show.</p> <p>Russia's oil-market resilience has drawn a mixed reaction in Washington, which is juggling two conflicting goals: Tamping down inflation with increased global oil supplies, and keeping economic pressure on Mr. Putin.</p>

Oil prices, which spiked past \$130 a barrel in the first weeks of the war, have settled around \$100 in recent weeks. While still higher than a year ago, the retreat has brought down gas-station prices in the U.S. and Europe.

Russian energy sales have flourished by finding new buyers, new means of payment, new traders and new ways of financing exports, according to oil traders, former Russian industry executives and shipping officials.

“There came a realization that the world needs oil, and nobody’s brave enough to embargo 7.5 million barrels a day of Russian oil and oil products,” said Sergey Vakulenko, an analyst and former Russian energy executive.

After buyers in the U.S., the European Union and their Pacific allies cut back their Russian oil imports, much of it went to nations in Asia that have declined to take sides in the conflict.

An unexpected market has been the Middle East. Exports of Russian fuel oil, a lightly refined version of crude, now go to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, often stopping in Egypt en route.

The Russian oil is either burned in Saudi power stations or exported from Fujairah, a U.A.E. port and hot spot for blending Russian and Iranian oils to conceal their provenance. This is oil that before the war was shipped to U.S. refiners.

The Russian imports, purchased at a discount, free state giant Saudi Arabian Oil Co. to export its crude at market prices. “The Saudis are happy to take their oil and sell it rather than burning it,” said Carole Nakhle, chief executive at consulting firm Crystol Energy.

The arrangement adds supply to the global oil market, helping put a lid on prices. “This is a win-win situation for the Russians and even, I would say, for the Europeans and the U.S.,” Ms. Nakhle said.

It also strengthens Russian ties with the Middle East, where [Mr. Putin is capitalizing on friction](#) between the Saudis and the Biden administration. Riyadh, joined with Moscow in a cartel known as OPEC+, has resisted U.S. pressure to pump more crude. That has propped up prices, helping Russia during the months when its oil traded at a significant discount.

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman [said last week OPEC could cut oil production](#), rebuffing U.S. pressure to open the spigots and instead sticking by Moscow.

Loose labeling

In most cases, Russian oil is legal to buy and sell. The U.S. and EU designed sanctions on the financial system that allow payments for oil to flow to non-sanctioning countries, as well as keep energy prices from rising further.

Many Western institutions, including banks and commodity trading houses, went beyond what was required by law and said they would cut back or stop any transactions that touched Russian oil. That left smaller traders to facilitate Russian exports when such firms as [Glencore](#) PLC and Gunvor wound down their handling of oil produced by Russia’s state-backed Rosneft Oil Co.

[These smaller players](#) moved personnel to Dubai and Singapore to skirt short-lived EU sanctions on dealing with Rosneft, said traders and industry executives.

To [help obscure its oil-trade workarounds](#), Moscow ended monthly updates on oil production and other data, making it difficult to gauge activity. Often, Russian port documentation no longer details where the country’s oil is heading and who is shipping it, according to traders.

Middlemen move Russian oil from one ship to another while at sea, an expensive maneuver that both disguises its origin and fills vessels too large to reach Russian ports on the Baltic Sea. Traders say it is

likely done to ensure that financial institutions, mindful of sanctions and damage to their reputations, don't withdraw funding and insurance for the shipments.

Iranian, Venezuelan and now Russian fuel oil is stored in the trading hub of Fujairah and intentionally disguised, according to oil traders. One trader in Switzerland said he was offered fuel oil that, based on characteristics such as its sulfur content, was clearly Russian. The label said otherwise.

The rewiring of the oil market stabilized the Russian energy industry after the fear of sanctions struck early in the war. Western buyers and European lenders that bankroll commodity markets froze out Russia. Earlier this year, traders predicted daily Russian exports would fall by as many as 3 million barrels.

China, Turkey and Middle East nations quickly stepped up their purchases, taking advantage of discounted prices and opening lucrative new trade routes for Russian crude. Some refine Russian oil and make profits exporting it to the West as gasoline and diesel.

India is now Russia's best customer. Companies there, under government orders, went from near-zero Russian oil imports to almost a million barrels a day within weeks of the Ukraine invasion.

Imports have ebbed recently because of refinery maintenance work, said an executive at state-owned Indian Oil Corp, but the company signed a contract with Rosneft to lock in supplies until 2028.

"Russian oil will find its new way into India, China and other markets," said Evgeny Gribov, who in March resigned as an executive at Lukoil PJSC, Russia's second-biggest oil producer. "And even sold at a discount it is more than enough to continue fueling the war."

Shadow war

In the long run, Russia will struggle to remain a top-tier oil supplier, said analysts and current and former energy executives. There are physical limits on how much Russian crude that refiners in India and China can take. And, as Russian machinery ages and access to Western software is lost, sanctions that ban technology imports cloud future energy prospects.

Winter will test the resolve of Moscow and its adversaries. On Dec. 5, the EU is due to phase in an embargo on Russian oil and a potentially punishing ban on insuring and financing Russian oil cargoes. If enforced, which some traders and analysts doubt, the measures would significantly escalate efforts to handicap Russia's economy.

The U.S. and its allies have largely spared such restrictions to avoid driving energy prices higher.

Arkady Gevorkyan, an analyst at Citigroup, said Russia might struggle to find new buyers for about 1.25 million barrels of the crude and fuel exports that currently head to Europe each day. Livia Gallarati of Energy Aspects said Russia's daily output of crude and a related fuel known as condensate could drop some 2 million barrels by March next year.

Washington is trying to coax Brussels into restrictions that would limit Russian oil revenue without driving up prices. The U.S. wants the EU to bar insuring cargoes only if they don't comply with a per-barrel price cap. The aim is to shrink Mr. Putin's war chest while keeping prices from new highs.

"We don't want Big Macs being sold in Moscow," a senior Treasury official said. "We want cheap oil flowing through the Baltic."

Some traders and analysts are skeptical and there has been little progress since Treasury proposed the price-cap idea in June.

Proceeding with the EU's proposed restrictions would reveal the continent's willingness to absorb economic pain on behalf of Ukraine. Many believe Moscow would respond by cutting Europe's natural gas supply, which of late has flowed at around 20% of capacity on the Nord Stream pipeline, to zero.

	“Vladimir Putin has put mutually assured destruction on the table, said Helima Croft, head of commodity strategy at RBC Capital Markets.
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HEADLINE	08/29 Kent school board deadlock: still on strike
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/kent-school-board-deadlocks-on-decision-to-seek-injunction-to-end-strike/
GIST	<p>In a 2-2 vote, the Kent School Board deadlocked Monday on a measure to request a court injunction to force its striking teachers back to work.</p> <p>The board was weighing an injunction in an effort to end three days of picketing. But board member Joseph Benton called it an intimidation tactic, and said it would be manipulative to bring this issue into the courts.</p> <p>Board member Awale Farah, who voted in favor of the injunction, said he did so to stand up for the families of color who do not understand the bargaining process.</p> <p>“It’s not a decision that I made lightly,” he said. “I’m going to be losing a lot of friends but I can ... look at myself in the mirror with this decision.”</p> <p>After the vote, teachers who had crowded into the board chambers cheered. With no injunction in the works and no contract, the two sides will continue to negotiate. There is no school on Tuesday.</p> <p>Kent educators went on strike Aug. 25, on what would have been the first day of school in the district, and continued to picket in front of schools Monday. Kent Education Association members say they want more pay to keep staffing positions competitive with neighboring school districts, and a manageable caseload for staff working with English learners and students in special education.</p> <p>The district calls the strike “unlawful” and a breach of contract. “The continued breach will cause immediate invasion of the rights held by the District and will result in actual and substantial injury to the District, its students, and community in the absence of an injunction ordering KEA members back to work,” the district wrote in the proposed resolution that would have authorized the lawsuit against KEA.</p> <p>One of the School Board’s seats is vacant, so there was no fifth member to break the tie.</p> <p>Kent officials have offered a 6.3% salary increase for first-year teachers, bumping the base salary up to about \$65,000. The offer also includes a \$1,000 stipend for every union member.</p> <p>Under the district’s proposal, three-quarters of union members would earn at least \$77,000 a year.</p> <p>The union, which has about 1,700 members, said the proposal focuses only on pay, while the union is also concerned about class size, caseload and mental health.</p> <p>“To our members, this is about much more than just money,” said KEA Vice President Layla Jones in a statement. “We are thinking about the classrooms that our students are in and we want those classrooms to be well resourced, and well staffed.”</p> <p>Litigation will cost taxpayers about \$50,000, according to district estimates.</p> <p>“We are disappointed, but unfortunately not surprised, that the district chooses to play games and spend money on attorneys rather than seriously engage with school staff on what students need,” said Tim Martin, union president, in a statement. “We are still waiting for a proposal from the district that addresses student-centered supports and stops attacking workers’ rights.”</p>

April Thousand, a chemistry teacher at Kent-Meridian High School, said that though pay is an issue, the larger issue is the need for more mental health support for students. This past school year, she said, neither she nor her students had enough support.

“Last year was really difficult with everyone being so far behind,” Thousand said. “I support my students as much as I can, and they confide in me, but they need professional services. It’s so frustrating.”

In 2021-22, there was one therapist at Kent-Meridian and appointments filled up fast, Thousand said. Kent-Meridian is a high-poverty school and there are many refugee and immigrant students who get mental health support from the school.

“Some kids were desperate to hook up with mental health services,” Thousand said. Thousand had a student who was from Albania, and whose family didn’t believe in mental health services, so the student couldn’t talk to her family about her needs.

Despite the child care hardships that the delay of the new school year has caused for families, the union has received support from parents.

“I am in full support of the teachers and the other labor partners bargaining right now,” said Kari Reifel, a parent with two children at Glenridge Elementary School. “Most of the schools are excellent and staff are excellent but do not have the support of administrators and not enough staff are hired. We’re competing with districts 15 minutes away that pay more money.”

Reifel said this past year there was a student being disruptive in her child’s classroom. The teacher had to stop the class to handle that situation.

“That’s a concern because that child is not getting the support they need and my child is missing out on learning because [the teacher] had to leave the classroom,” Reifel said.

Jessica Kessler and Christy Stanton have children at Lake Youngs Elementary School and are helping make meals for children to pick up while the strike continues. Both attended the rally Monday night and said the district should be doing more to make sure students are fed.

“This week kids came by the school looking for food,” Kessler said. “It was obvious they haven’t eaten.” Reifel noted that litigation is going to cause a larger divide between administrators and KEA. And Thousand echoed that idea.

“What teacher is going to be attracted to Kent with this salary and school board tactics they are using?” she asked “I’m afraid it’s not attracting new talent.”

Kent educators last went on strike in 2009. The strike lasted 15 days, and to end it, the school district [sought an injunction](#) to force teachers back to work. A King County Superior Court judge ruled the union would be fined \$1,500 a day and teachers would be fined \$200 a day if the strike continued. On Sept. 14, 2009, [teachers voted overwhelmingly](#) to accept a tentative contract agreement, avoiding the fines.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Reinfections trigger more long Covid?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/will-all-those-omicron-infections-and-reinfections-trigger-lots-more-long-covid/
GIST	<p>The latest COVID-19 surge, caused by a shifting mix of quickly evolving omicron subvariants, appears to be waning, with cases and hospitalizations beginning to fall.</p> <p>Like past COVID-19 waves, this one will leave a lingering imprint in the form of long COVID, an ill-defined catchall term for a set of symptoms that can include debilitating fatigue, difficulty breathing, chest pain and brain fog.</p>

Although omicron infections are [proving milder](#) overall than those caused by last summer's delta variant, omicron has also proved capable of triggering long-term symptoms and organ damage. But whether omicron causes long COVID symptoms as often — and as severe — as previous variants is a matter of heated study.

Michael Osterholm, director of the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, is among the researchers who say the far greater number of omicron infections compared with earlier variants signals the need to prepare for a significant boost in people with long COVID. The U.S. has recorded nearly 38 million COVID-19 infections so far this year, as omicron has blanketed the nation. That's about 40% of all infections reported since the start of the pandemic, according to the [Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Research Center](#).

Long COVID "is a parallel pandemic that most people aren't even thinking about," said Akiko Iwasaki, a professor of immunobiology at Yale University. "I suspect there will be millions of people who acquire long COVID after omicron infection."

Scientists have just begun to compare variants head to head, with varying results. While [one recent study](#) in The Lancet suggests that omicron is less likely to cause long COVID, another found the [same rate of neurological problems](#) after omicron and delta infections.

Estimates of the proportion of patients affected by long COVID also vary, from [4% to 5% in triple-vaccinated adults](#) to [as many as 50% among the unvaccinated](#), based on differences in the populations studied. One reason for that broad range is that long COVID has been defined in widely varying ways in different studies, ranging from self-reported mental foggiess for a few months after infection to a dangerously impaired inability to regulate pulse and blood pressure that may last years.

Even at the low end of those estimates, the sheer number of omicron infections this year would swell long COVID caseloads. "That's exactly what we did find in the UK," said Claire Steves, a professor of aging and health at King's College in London and [author of the Lancet study](#), which found patients have been 24% to 50% less likely to develop long COVID during the omicron wave than during the delta wave. "Even though the risk of long COVID is lower, because so many people have caught omicron, the absolute numbers with long COVID went up," Steves said.

A [recent study](#) analyzing a patient database from the U.S. Veterans Health Administration found that reinfections dramatically increased the risk of serious health issues, even in people with mild symptoms. The study of more than 5.4 million VA patients, including more than 560,000 women, found that people reinfected with COVID-19 were twice as likely to die or have a heart attack as people infected only once. And they were far more likely to experience health problems of all kinds as of six months later, including trouble with their lungs, kidneys, and digestive system.

"We're not saying a second infection is going to feel worse; we're saying it adds to your risk," said Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, chief of research and education service at the Veterans Affairs St. Louis Health Care System.

Researchers say the study, published online but not yet peer-reviewed, should be interpreted with caution. Some noted that VA patients have unique characteristics, and tend to be older men with high rates of chronic conditions that increase the risks for long COVID. They warned that the study's findings cannot be extrapolated to the general population, which is younger and healthier overall.

"We need to validate these findings with other studies," said Dr. Harlan Krumholz, director of the Yale New Haven Hospital Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation. Still, he added, the VA study has some "disturbing implications."

With an estimated [82% of Americans](#) having been infected at least once with the coronavirus as of mid-July, most new cases now are reinfections, said Justin Lessler, a professor of epidemiology at the University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health.

Of course, people's risk of reinfection depends not just on their immune system, but also on the precautions they're taking, such as masking, getting booster shots and avoiding crowds.

New Jersey salon owner Tee Hundley, 43, has had COVID-19 three times, twice before vaccines were widely available and again this summer, after she was fully vaccinated. She is still suffering the consequences.

After her second infection, she returned to work as a cosmetologist at her Jersey City salon but struggled with illness and shortness of breath for the next eight months, often feeling like she was "breathing through a straw."

She was exhausted, and sometimes slow to find her words. While waxing a client's eyebrows, "I would literally forget which eyebrow I was waxing," Hundley said. "My brain was so slow."

When she got a breakthrough infection in July, her symptoms were short-lived and milder: cough, runny nose, and fatigue. But the tightness in her chest remains.

"I feel like that's something that will always be left over," said Hundley, who warns friends with COVID-19 not to overexert. "You may not feel terrible, but inside of your body there is a war going on."

Although each omicron subvariant has different mutations, they're similar enough that people infected with one, such as BA.2, have relatively good protection against newer versions of omicron, such as BA.5. People sickened by earlier variants are far more vulnerable to BA.5.

[Several studies](#) have found that [vaccination reduces the risk](#) of long COVID. But the measure of that protection varies by study, from as little as a [15% reduction](#) in risk to a more than [50% decrease](#).

A [study](#) published in July found the risk of long COVID dropped with each dose people received.

For now, the only surefire way to prevent long COVID is to avoid getting sick. That's no easy task as the virus mutates and Americans have largely stopped masking in public places. Current vaccines are great at preventing severe illness but do not prevent the virus from jumping from one person to the next. Scientists are working on next-generation vaccines — "variant-proof" shots that would work on any version of the virus, as well as nasal sprays that might actually prevent spread. If they succeed, that could dramatically curb new cases of long COVID.

"We need vaccines that reduce transmission," Al-Aly said. "We need them yesterday."

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HEADLINE	08/29 Port Angeles educators authorize strike
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/education/port-angeles-teachers-authorize-strike-education-association/281-1a4bff74-6c65-4d9d-84ea-467aadc4e0de
GIST	<p>PORT ANGELES, Wash. — The Port Angeles Education Association voted to authorize a strike just three days before school is set to begin.</p> <p>Port Angeles Education Association is made up of 250 educators in the Port Angeles Public Schools. The union claims the Port Angeles School District "has yet to agree to the supports our students and our educators need to be successful."</p>

	<p>“If the district team is willing to come in, commit the time and attention then we can reach an agreement,” said Port Angeles Education Association President John Henry. “Get the district to the table and we can get this done. PAEA is ready. We have been since February.”</p> <p>The teacher's union claims the school district only scheduled four partial bargaining dates since June. In part, teachers are bargaining over planning time and class sizes.</p> <p>Other teachers' unions around the state have also voted to authorize strikes during contract negotiations with school districts.</p> <p>The Kent School District has canceled the first day of school multiple times amid a teachers' strike, where teachers are bargaining for higher wages, lower class sizes and more manageable case loads.</p> <p>The North Thurston Teacher's Union just reached a collective bargaining agreement with the school district after picketing last week over workloads and increased pay.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 North Thurston tentative deal w/teachers
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/education/north-thurston-teachers-union-tentative-agreement-district/281-8aed9e5c-85a8-43e0-8541-ca6644de5ede
GIST	<p>THURSTON COUNTY, Wash. — North Thurston Public Schools and the North Thurston Education Association reached a tentative collective bargaining agreement for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years on Monday.</p> <p>Ratification of the agreement is expected to be complete by the end of September. Classes are expected to start on schedule.</p> <p>"I am proud of our union members who united to fight for better learning conditions for our students," Education Association President Ray Nelson said in a prepared statement. "This [tentative agreement] reflects our dedication to public education."</p> <p>The tentative agreement comes after North Thurston teachers picketed over workloads and increased pay last week.</p> <p>The agreement, according to a statement from the Education Association, improves student learning, addresses workload issues for special-education teachers, elementary and secondary educators and staff associates, and "ensures that North Thurston compensation is competitive with neighboring districts."</p> <p>Compensation was part of the bargaining process because "the cost of living has gone up and people need some relief from that," Nelson previously stated.</p> <p>The North Thurston Education Association represents 970 educators in the school district and was in negotiations throughout the year to come up with a new collective bargaining agreement before the current contracts ended at the end of August.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Peninsula SD looks to Army trauma training
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/education/school-district-trauma-training/281-ba31d52f-8936-4f88-a620-65265f02b9cc
GIST	<p>GIG HARBOR, Wash. — A U.S. Army combat surgeon is helping the Peninsula School District's medical staff learn how to respond to a mass casualty incident.</p> <p>Dr. Quinton Hatch brought his expertise and his preferred lifesaving tool, tourniquets, to Gig Harbor's Pioneer Elementary School on Monday morning.</p>

	<p>“This has saved more lives on the battlefield than anything else,” Hatch said, holding a tourniquet up in front of a classroom full of school nurses and medical techs who work in Gig Harbor schools.</p> <p>The 25 employees participated in drills simulating campus shootings, an explosion, and practiced moving patients up flights of stairs in stretchers in the event of an evacuation during a natural disaster.</p> <p>The scenarios played out in the school's playground, which Hatch said added to the intensity.</p> <p>"It's about getting a little bit comfortable being uncomfortable," said Hatch.</p> <p>Hatch, who has children in the district, said he contacted the superintendent, offering to train the staff on how to treat serious wounds.</p> <p>“We can’t prevent all accidents, all violence, so the more people who have these capabilities, the better off we’re going to be in society,” said Hatch.</p> <p>“We are training for preparedness,” said Peninsula School District Superintendent Krestin Bahr. “We need to be prepared for anything, right? An earthquake, and all trauma in schools, so we are very, very fortunate.”</p> <p>Hatch said he would like to make tourniquet training incorporated into high school health classes and said all school nurses across the country should receive the training.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Oregon fire crews battle to stop wildfire
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/crews-battle-oregon-wildfire-heat-wind-threaten-disaster-rcna45380
GIST	<p>Fire officials hope a surge of hands on the perimeter of Oregon's largest August wildfire can stop it before a heat wave and potential wind gusts multiply its size.</p> <p>The 10,709-acre Rum Creek Fire had already doubled in size over the weekend, claimed the life of a firefighter and burned a home to the ground, they said.</p> <p>Fear over predicted 100-degree days and potential gusty winds is inspiring a scramble to clear and secure fire lines along the blaze's back end, to the south, where thousands of homes could get fireside views if it reverses with the wind, officials said.</p> <p>Additional fire crews that specialize in structure protection arrived Sunday, according to the latest federal update. The number of state-led structure-protection firefighters at the scene was 135, the update says.</p> <p>"They are installing sprinkler kits, using hand tools to remove vegetation and other measures to better protect homes and outbuildings," said the update, published under the leadership of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.</p> <p>The wildfire 240 miles south of Portland is in an area that includes the Rogue National Wild and Scenic River and Rand Recreation Area, both managed by the Bureau of Land Management.</p> <p>The blaze is one of 42 active wildfires in the Southwest, California, the Pacific Northwest, Idaho and Montana, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. More than 300,000 acres have been consumed, it said in a daily report Monday.</p> <p>The center warned of "significant wildland fire potential" this week. For southwest Oregon, there is concern for structures south of the Rum Creek Fire.</p>

"The concern for the next handful of days — there's triple-digit temperatures in the forecast, and we're going to see the potential for gusty winds that will push it south-southeast, into a very populated area," said Kyle Reed, a spokesperson for the federal and state response.

National Weather Service meteorologist Brian Nieuwenhuis said the shift that would have winds moving from north to south is likely Tuesday into the evening. Gusts could reach 20 mph.

"It's looking pretty likely," he said. "It's not a strong wind, but it is a complete shift in direction. It would be blowing directly into populated areas."

In the path of the fire, if it takes a U-turn, is the resort town of Galice, named for Frenchman Louis Galice, said to have discovered gold in the area dominated by the Rogue River. The population of the unincorporated community was not tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Residents of the nearby town of Merlin were told to stand by for possible evacuation orders, and the Josephine County Sheriff's Office suspended boating on the Rogue River in the area of the fire.

Mandatory evacuations were in effect for areas along the perimeter of the fire.

State fire officials said 824 homes threatened by the Rum Creek Fire were the subject of defense efforts. More than 900 firefighters, managers and support personnel, including crews for four helicopters, were assigned to the blaze.

On Saturday, Gov. Kate Brown cited the threat to Galice and nearby Rand in giving the state fire marshal command of the fire and ordering local departments to contribute firefighters to the effort under mutual aid.

On Monday, she declared a state of emergency to ensure that Oregon is prepared for the worst amid a forecast of fire weather, including drier-than-normal conditions.

The worst includes what happened in 2020, when five blazes expanded beyond 100,000 acres and multiple other smaller wildfires raged during September, killing nine people and burning thousands of structures, according to a state after-action review and NBC affiliate KGW of Portland.

The result was successful legislation last year that will provide more than \$220 million for fire preparedness and modernization of firefighting tools and organizations.

Karl Koenig, the president of the Oregon State Firefighters Council, a union that represents more than 3,500 state firefighters, emergency medical services workers and other first responders, said the ashes of 2020 loom large in Oregon.

That year, firefighters across the state were spread perilously thin as they battled 1 million total acres of wildfire. The disaster inspired soul searching and a review of how fires are managed in the state.

Scrutiny after the fires helped produce a spirit of prevention and fast attacks based on the latest mapping and forecast modeling, which can be seen in the fight against the current threat, Koenig said.

"We're pouring into that Rum Creek Fire," he said. "If it goes south, we're talking thousands of homes. But it's still at a manageable level. We're able to concentrate resources and put them where they'll be most effective."

The blaze started Aug. 17 with a lightning strike and, the next day, claimed the life of firefighter Logan Taylor, 25, the operator of a private firefighting company contracted by the state, according to the Oregon Department of Forestry and Bureau of Land Management.

Officials said he was struck by a tree.

	<p>Taylor was the second firefighter to die after having been struck by a falling tree in Oregon this month. Collin Hagan, 27, died Aug. 10 fighting the Big Swamp Fire in Douglas County, federal officials said.</p> <p>Oregon public institutions were under a gubernatorial order Monday to fly flags at half-staff in remembrance of Taylor. "My heart breaks for the family, friends, and crew of Logan Taylor," Brown, the governor, said in a statement Friday.</p> <p>The heat wave, fueled by a high-pressure system over California and Nevada that was moving north, was forecast to strike southwest Oregon hardest Tuesday and sustain above-normal high temperatures in the area of the fire for most of the week.</p> <p>High temperatures above the 100-degree mark are expected Tuesday, according to the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Relief is possible Friday, when a minor cold front off the Pacific could move in and reduce temperatures by 5 to 10 degrees in the area of the Rum Creek Fire, said Nieuwenhuis of the weather service.</p> <p>The weather change would be welcome, Nieuwenhuis said, if it didn't include stiff winds from the Pacific.</p> <p>"That would be a concern," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Jackson MS without reliable running water
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/jackson-mississippi-reliable-running-water-rcna45397
GIST	<p>The city of Jackson, Mississippi, was without a reliable water supply Monday after rain and flooding pushed the Pearl River to dangerous levels, officials said.</p> <p>Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba declared a water system emergency Monday evening because of complications from the Pearl River flooding. He said issues at the O.B. Curtis Water Plant resulted in low or no water pressure for many residents.</p> <p>"The water shortage is likely to last the next couple of days," the city said in a statement.</p> <p>Jackson, the state's capital and largest city, had water problems even before the rain that prompted fears of floods from the Pearl River.</p> <p>The city has been under a boil-water notice since last month because tests found a cloudy quality to city-supplied water that could hinder the disinfection process and lead to illness.</p> <p>Gov. Tate Reeves said at a news conference Monday night that the city's water system was unable to produce enough water.</p> <p>"Until it is fixed, it means we do not have reliable running water at scale," Reeves said. "It means the city cannot produce enough water to fight fires, to reliably flush toilets and to meet other critical needs."</p> <p>Flooding in Jackson, a city of around 153,000, was less severe than had been feared after the state got record rainfall, officials said.</p> <p>The Pearl River was forecast to remain at a little over 35 feet but begin a slow decrease Monday night, the National Weather Service said.</p> <p>"The good news is, is that the water levels came in lower than projected," Lumumba said at a briefing earlier Monday, adding that at the time it was believed that water had entered only one home.</p>

	<p>But river water coming into what he said was an already "very fragile water treatment facility" meant it needed to be treated differently and resulted in a reduction in water going out into the system, he said.</p> <p>"This is a citywide challenge that they are working to recover from," Lumumba said.</p> <p>Reeves said there would be state emergency declarations in addition to the city's.</p> <p>The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency would distribute water to residents, and the state would also be in charge of an effort to start emergency repairs and maintenance to get the water flowing again, Reeves said.</p> <p>State Health Officer Daniel Edney said at a news conference: "The water is not safe to drink. I'd even say it's not safe to brush your teeth with — because we are not seeing adequate chlorination and an inability to consistently disinfect the water."</p> <p>Residents should fully boil water for at least three minutes, he said.</p> <p>Reeves said that the city's main water treatment facility had been "operating with zero redundancies," or backup systems, and that its main pumps had recently been damaged.</p> <p>Jackson Public Schools said that all classes would shift to virtual learning and that there would be no in-person instruction starting Tuesday because of the water shortage.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 BP chief under oath derides border policy
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/politics/border-patrol-chief-says-border-crisis-caused-bidens-no-consequences-policies-illegal-migrants
GIST	<p>EXCLUSIVE: Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said under oath that President Biden's border policies have "no consequences" for illegal migrants traveling into the U.S. and are to blame for the unprecedented surge at the border and release of hundreds of thousands into the interior of the country.</p> <p>Fox News Digital first obtained a video of Ortiz's assertions, which came during a recorded deposition from July 28 as part of discovery in a lawsuit by Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody against the Department of Homeland Security and other border agencies.</p> <p>Ortiz, who has more than 31 years of experience in law enforcement, told attorneys representing Florida that he believes migration will increase at an exponential rate at the southern border because there are no "consequences" in place to curb the tide of migrants flooding into the U.S.</p> <p>"In my experience, we have seen increases when there are no consequences," said Ortiz during deposition.</p> <p>"So, if migrant populations believe that they're going ... there are not going to be consequences, more of them will come to the border. Is that what you're saying?" questioned the attorney.</p> <p>Ortiz responded: "There is an assumption that if migrant populations are told that there is a potential that they may be released, that, yes, you can see increases."</p> <p>"So, it will increase at an exponential rate. Is that what is being suggested here?" continued the attorney.</p> <p>"Well, I do think it will increase, yeah," responded Ortiz.</p> <p>In addition, the attorney pressed Ortiz, asking, "Since President Biden was elected, does this document indicate that aliens illegally entering the United States perceive that they will be able to enter and remain in the United States?"</p> <p>"Yes," he told the lawyers while under oath.</p>

The "document" the plaintiff's attorney referred to was a spring 2021 memo that disclosed Biden's immigration policies, in part, fueled the migrant surge at the border.

The DHS document, which Moody exclusively shared with Fox News Digital in April, listed "Perceptions of favorable U.S. immigration policies" as one of the reasons migrants have given for surging to the border. Other reasons included pursuit of economic and educational opportunities.

Moody's lawsuit cites the spring memo along with the Biden administration's November 2021 "Alternatives to Detention" document, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection memo detailing the Biden administration's implementation of program for migrants coming across the southern border.

Moody's lawsuit charges that the agencies under Biden's direction are failing to follow established federal law, the Immigration and Nationality Act, that requires officials to detain illegal aliens at the border until they are sent back to their country of citizenship.

Specifically, the Alternatives to Detention program, which was created by Congress in 2004 and has seen enrollments double under the Biden administration compared to previous administrations, uses various forms of case management and technology to monitor about 5% of the illegal immigrants who are on the "non-detained docket," meaning that while they are in the country illegally, they are not in ICE detention. The tracking includes GPS monitoring via ankle bracelets, phone check-ins and smartphone apps.

However, the program is seen by critics as not particularly effective, as many of the migrants eventually abscond and disappear into the interior of the country.

A former Trump-era review of the program by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) concluded that it has "little value," is of "significant expense" and saw the vast majority of illegal immigrants enrolled in the program for their entire immigration proceedings eventually flee into the country.

In addition, a joint Border Patrol and ICE memo circulated on July 18 obtained by Fox News Digital replaced and expanded the original November 2021 memo to include illegal immigrants who are traveling as part of a family unit or single adults from certain countries are being released without full processing and then must report within a time period to an ICE facility.

The memo also notes that the program should be "used sparingly," only when justified by an "urgent humanitarian reason" or to "address overcrowding."

During the deposition, Ortiz went on to testify that the southern border is currently in crisis and replied "yes" when asked if the border is "less safe for Americans and aliens alike."

Ortiz said he agreed with a statement by the plaintiff attorney that "unprecedented numbers" of migrants have illegally entered the U.S. this year. There have so far been more than 2 million migrant encounters with Border Patrol this fiscal year, already surpassing the historic 1.7 million encountered last fiscal year.

Ortiz's testimony comes after DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said during the Aspen Security Forum that although the situation is a "historic challenge," the border is "secure."

A U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesperson told Fox News Digital: "As a matter of policy, U.S. Customs and Border Protection generally does not comment on pending litigation."

"After the Biden administration denied that they were engaged in catch-and-release, and that they were responsible for the historic surge at our southern border, Florida got the chief of Border Patrol to admit, under oath, the truth," Moody told Fox News Digital.

"The Biden administration caused the surge, made the border less safe and is flagrantly violating the very federal laws they swore to uphold. The Biden administration is putting hard-working border patrol agents

	<p>in impossible and untenable positions — risking their lives and safety, and I want to thank Chief Ortiz for testifying truthfully at his deposition," Moody said.</p> <p>The lawsuit brought by Florida is set for trial in January 2023 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 Iran closes Iraq border amid violent unrest
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-closes-border-iraq-flights-stop-amid-violent-89032285
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD -- Iran closed its land borders to Iraq as flights to the country halted Tuesday amid violence in Baghdad following an influential Shiite cleric's announcement he would resign from politics.</p> <p>The death toll rose to 22 Iraqis on Tuesday after the unrest erupted the previous day, according to two medical officials.</p> <p>Iraq's military said four rockets were launched into the heavily fortified Green Zone, the seat of Iraq's government where armed clashes raged overnight between a militia loyal to Iraqi cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and Iraqi security forces.</p> <p>Al-Sadr's sudden resignation has catapulted Iraq into violence and chaos with no clear path out. The cleric derives power from his ability to mobilize and control his large grassroots following, but with his stated exit from politics, he has implicitly given them the freedom to act as they see fit.</p> <p>To avenge the killing of unarmed loyalists, al-Sadr's militia Saraya Salam clashed with Iraqi security forces in the Green Zone using an array of weapons, including mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, two security officials said. The militia also took over some headquarters belonging to rival Iran-backed militia groups in the southern provinces overnight.</p> <p>Iranian state television cited “unrests” and “curfew” in Iraqi cities for the reason for the border closures. It urged Iranians avoid any travel to Iraq while urging Iran's Shiite pilgrims in Iraq to avoid further travel between cities.</p> <p>Iraq’s government has been deadlocked since al-Sadr’s party won the largest share of seats in October parliamentary elections but not enough to secure a majority government. His refusal to negotiate with his Iran-backed Shiite rivals and subsequent exit from the talks has catapulted the country into political uncertainty and volatility amid intensifying intra-Shiite wrangling.</p> <p>To further his political interests, al-Sadr has wrapped his rhetoric with a nationalist and reform agenda that resonates powerfully among his broad grassroots base of supporters. They are calling for the dissolution of parliament and early elections without the participation of Iran-backed Shiite groups, which they see as responsible for the status quo.</p> <p>The decision came as millions of Iranians were preparing to visit Iraq for annual pilgrimage to Shiite sites.</p> <p>Kuwait meanwhile has urged its citizens in neighboring Iraq to leave the country. The state-run KUNA news agency also encouraged those hoping to travel to Iraq to delay their plans over the eruption of violent street clashes between rival Shiite groups in the country.</p> <p>The tiny Gulf Arab sheikhdom of Kuwait shares a 254 kilometer (158 mile)-long border with Iraq.</p> <p>The Netherlands has evacuated its embassy in the Green Zone, Foreign Affairs Minister Wopke Hoekstra tweeted early Tuesday.</p> <p>“There are firefights around the embassy in Baghdad. Our staff are now working at the German embassy elsewhere in the city,” Hoekstra wrote.</p>

	<p>Dubai's long-haul carrier Emirates stopped flights to Baghdad on Tuesday over the ongoing unrest in Iraq. The carrier said that it was "monitoring the situation closely."</p> <p>It did not say whether flights would resume for Wednesday.</p> <p>Protesters loyal to cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who resigned Monday, pulled down the cement barriers outside the government palace with ropes and breached the palace gates. Many rushed into the lavish salons and marbled halls of the palace, a key meeting place for Iraqi heads of state and foreign dignitaries.</p> <p>Iraq's military announced a nationwide curfew, and the caretaker premier suspended Cabinet sessions in response to the violence. Medical officials said dozens of protesters were wounded by gunfire and tear gas and physical altercations with riot police.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Ukraine southern counter-offensive begins
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/ukraine-says-long-anticipated-southern-offensive-has-begun-2022-08-29/
GIST	<p>KYIV, Aug 29 (Reuters) - The Ukrainian military on Monday started a long-awaited counter-offensive against Russian forces in the country's south, its southern command said on Monday.</p> <p>Command spokesperson Natalia Humeniuk confirmed the offensive in a news briefing and said it included the Kherson region.</p> <p>Ukraine has regularly stated its intention to retake its south, and in particular the city of Kherson, the only regional capital that Russia has been able to capture from Ukraine since it invaded six months ago.</p> <p>The region lies north of the Russian-held Crimean peninsula and has coasts on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.</p> <p>Humeniuk said at the briefing that recent strikes on Russia's southern logistical routes had "unquestionably weakened the enemy". More than 10 Russian ammunition dumps had been hit over the last weeks.</p> <p>However, she declined to be drawn into giving more details about the new offensive.</p> <p>Russia's forces in the south are "rather powerful" and have been built up over a long time, she told the briefing.</p> <p>"The counter-offensive is already ongoing for a while (in the sense of) exhausting the enemy and not giving him an opportunity to advance," Humeniuk told public broadcaster Suspilne, adding that the offensive phase of this had begun on Monday.</p> <p>Shortly after the announcement, Ukraine's presidential chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, wrote a cryptic message on Telegram proclaiming "our Kherson is ahead."</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Russia scales-back war games w/China
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-sharply-scales-back-far-east-war-games-with-china-2022-08-29/
GIST	<p>LONDON, Aug 29 (Reuters) - Russian military exercises in the Far East this week will take place on a far smaller scale than when they were last held in 2018, reflecting the strain on Moscow's forces as they struggle to make headway on the battlefields of eastern Ukraine.</p> <p>Announcing the "Vostok 2022" war games, in which China will also participate, the Russian defence ministry said last month that its capacity to stage such exercises was in no way affected by what Russia calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine.</p>

But the 50,000 personnel that Moscow said on Monday will take part are a fraction of the official figure of 300,000 that were said to be involved four years ago - though some Western military analysts suspect that number was overstated.

The defence ministry said 140 military aircraft and over 5,000 items of military hardware would be deployed - way down on the 1,000 aircraft and 36,000 tanks and armoured vehicles that were reported to have been sent into the 2018 manoeuvres.

"This is going to be the smallest strategic-level exercise in years because the entire ground forces potential is engaged in operations in Ukraine. So the exercise will have to be very small," said Konrad Muzyka, director of the Rochan military consultancy based in Poland.

Still, the exercises will be closely watched by regional powers such as Japan and South Korea as a significant show of force by Russia and China, which joined up in Vostok 2018 and will take part again in drills on land and at sea.

Russia said its Pacific Fleet and China's navy would take part in "joint practical actions to defend maritime communications and areas of maritime economic activity" in the Sea of Japan.

Russia's armed forces news channel Zvezda on Monday posted video of Chinese troops unloading armoured vehicles delivered to Russia by rail.

FORCE DEPLETION

Russia has drawn heavily on units from the Far East to reinforce its war effort in Ukraine, thousands of miles to the west, where its forces have sustained heavy losses in men and equipment in the six months since its Feb. 24 invasion while occupying about a fifth of its neighbour's territory.

Muzyka said he estimated that 70-80% of units from Russia's eastern military district had been deployed to Ukraine, making it "impossible" for Moscow to free up 50,000 men for exercises. He said a more plausible figure would be 10,000 to 15,000.

"It's just Russia pretending everything is fine and they still have the capability to launch a large-scale military exercise with China. But in reality I think the scope of this exercise, especially from a ground force perspective, is going to be very, very limited," he said.

The eastern military district includes part of Siberia and has its headquarters in Khabarovsk, near the Chinese border.

The defence ministry said the exercises would take place from Sept. 1 to 7 and would also involve military contingents and observers from Algeria, India, Laos, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Syria and the former Soviet republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	08/30 Self-harm posts surge on Twitter
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/08/30/self-harm-hashtags-twitter/
GIST	<p>A Twitter user in apparent distress turned to the social media platform earlier this month to mull their next steps: "might just let my Razors win tonight" the user said in a Tweet that racked up more than 1,500 likes, 20 comments and 250 retweets.</p> <p>The post was an example of what researchers from Network Contagion Research Institute and Rutgers University say is a dramatic rise in recent months of tweets related to self-harm. In a new report, the</p>

researchers said they have detected a Twitter community that is increasingly posting graphic photos, with hashtags, that reveal bloody self-injury practices. The tweets are garnering unusually high engagement given the small number of followers of the accounts, the report found.

Among the disturbing statistics in the report is that since October, hashtags related to self-harm such as #shtwt,” which is short for “self-harm Twitter,” have increased roughly 500 percent, the report found.

At least some of the content also appears to flout Twitter’s longstanding rules against glorifying suicide and self-harm despite warnings about from activists several months ago that those tweets were growing on the site, the report said.

“When you glorify cutting and poking and these forms of self-harm, you’d probably have the effect of sort of validating and affirming it. I suspect that is encouraging more of it,” said Lee Jussim, a psychology professor at Rutgers University who helped write the report. “It smells to me like social media contagion.”

Twitter spokeswoman Lauren Alexander said in a statement the company takes self-harm content very seriously and would work to build a safer internet.

“We are continuing to review our policies in conversation with external experts and research like this report to ensure we are striking a balance between giving a voice to people who are struggling, and removing content which exploits those struggles,” Alexander said.

The research illustrates how social media companies such as Twitter struggle to disrupt problematic content. While social media companies seek to encourage connections among users with like-minded interests, critics say they often fail to catch and address harmful content that can spread rapidly among clusters of users.

The users posting to Twitter commonly use acronyms and coded language to discuss their cutting techniques, the report said. In addition to “shtwt,” they will refer to superficial self-cuts as a “catscratch” because it often looks like cat scratches or “beans” to refer to deeper cuts. The term “raspberry filling” refers to blood, while “moots” is a reference to “mutually engaging in self-harm,” according to the report.

The number of users with #shtwt in their bios has doubled since October 2021. Meanwhile, monthly mentions of “shtwt” increased from 3880 tweets in October 2021 to close to 30,000 in July 2022, according to the report. Similarly, the number of mentions of beanstwt, which refers to extremely deep cutting, increased from less than 1,000 in October to over 4,500 tweets in August, the report said.

The researchers said that this kind of jargon and insidious language may foster a sense of community in which people who are feeling distressed end up encouraging each other to increase the depth or severity of their self-inflicted wounds.

In one recent example, the report cites a Tweet that said “this is the deepest I’ve done someone be proud of me,” accompanied by an image of the wounds. That tweet, which garnered over 2,000 likes and 165 retweets, elicited responses such as “that’s so pretty,” or “how beautiful,” according to the report.

Under Twitter’s [rules](#), users are barred from promoting or encouraging suicide. Users can’t ask for encouragement to engage in self-harm or suicide, including seeking partners for such activities. Users are allowed, however, to share their personal stories or coping mechanisms to address self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

Child advocacy group 5Rights Foundation submitted research to regulators in the United Kingdom that showed, among other findings, that Twitter users were sharing images and videos of cutting themselves, and telling others which razors they should use for self-harming and where to buy them, [according](#) to the Financial Times. Last October, the company told the newspaper that it was blocking #shtwt, #ouchietwt’, and #sliceytweet’ from appearing in future trends on the apps.

	<p>Experts said young people are particularly vulnerable to the potential harmful effects of self-harm content on Twitter. Jussim said the onset of cutting tends to happen in early and mid-adolescence and then slows down by early adulthood.</p> <p>“A lot of what you see on Twitter is likely to be 13, 14, 15 year-old kids looking for affirmation and meeting people like themselves,” Jussim said. “But it is possible and even likely that some of these people are predators trying to encourage these these young teens to do more of this.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/28 Hackers lay siege to US health system
SOURCE	https://www.politico.com/news/2022/08/28/hackers-have-laid-siege-to-u-s-health-care-and-a-tiny-hhs-agency-is-buckling-under-the-pressure-00053941
GIST	<p>Cyber crooks steal medical information of tens of millions of people in the U.S. every year, a number that is rising fast as health care undergoes its digital transformation.</p> <p>It leads to millions of dollars in losses for hospitals, insurers and other health care organizations, threatens care delivery and exposes patients to identity theft.</p> <p>But the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office for Civil Rights, which is tasked with investigating breaches, helping health care organizations bolster their defenses, and fining them for lax security, is poorly positioned to help. That’s because it has a dual mission — both to enforce the federal health privacy law known as HIPAA and to help the organizations protect themselves — and Congress has given it few resources to do the job.</p> <p>“They’re a fish out of water ... They were given the role of enforcement under HIPAA but weren’t given the resources to support that role,” said Mac McMillan, CEO of CynergisTek, a Texas firm that helps health care organizations improve their cybersecurity.</p> <p>Due to its shoestring budget, the Office for Civil Rights has fewer investigators than many local police departments, and its investigators have to deal with more than a hundred cases at a time. The office had a budget of \$38 million in 2022 — the cost of about 20 MRI machines that can cost \$1 million to \$3 million a pop.</p> <p>Another problem is that the office relies on the cooperation of the victims, the institutions that hackers have targeted, to provide evidence of the crimes. Those victims may sometimes be reluctant to report breaches, since HHS could then accuse them of violating HIPAA and levy fines that come on top of costs stemming from the breach and the ransoms often demanded by the hackers.</p> <p>Depending on the circumstances, it can seem like blaming the victim, especially since the hackers are sometimes funded or directed by foreign governments. And it’s raised questions about whether the U.S. government should be doing more to protect health organizations.</p> <p>In an Aug. 11 letter to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) and Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.), past co-chairs of a cybersecurity commission that examined the danger, raised that point, questioning the government’s “lack of robust and timely sharing of actionable threat information with industry partners.”</p> <p>‘A stronger hammer’</p> <p>The scope of the threat is massive and the consequences of breaches severe. According to a 2021 survey by the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society, more than two-thirds of health care organizations had a “significant” incident in the previous year — mostly phishing or ransomware attacks.</p>

These episodes pose potentially significant financial consequences and can threaten patients' lives. [A recent report](#) from cybersecurity company Cynerio and the Ponemon Institute, a cybersecurity research center, found that about 1 in 4 cyberattacks resulted in increased mortality by delaying care.

Experts said the health care sector is particularly vulnerable to attacks, partly due to its digital transformation and partly due to its vulnerability to ransomware. Disrupting care could endanger patients' lives, which can leave health care organizations feeling forced to fork over ransoms. In 2021 alone, hackers accessed records of nearly 50 million people, raising privacy concerns and leaving many vulnerable to fraud.

The HHS office expects to see 53,000 cases in the 2022 fiscal year. As of 2020, it had 77 investigators, some of whom are assigned to other things, like civil rights violations.

The Biden administration official who runs the Office for Civil Rights, Melanie Fontes Rainer, said her investigators have to pick their battles because they are "under incredible resource constraints and incredibly overworked."

She frames the problem as one of funding and the Biden administration has asked Congress to give the agency a roughly 58 percent budget increase in fiscal 2023, to \$60 million, that would allow it to hire 37 new investigators.

But advocates for victims want to be sure those new hires would favor helping them prevent future attacks over penalizing them for failing to stop past ones.

"If OCR is looking for money that will protect hospitals ... good. That's HHS' role — not just to penalize the victim," said Greg Garcia, executive director of the Healthcare and Public Health Sector Coordinating Council, which represents a number of sectors within health care targeted by the hackers.

For the most part, that's what the office does, but fines are always a possibility and Fontes Rainer said more resources will yield more enforcement that will encourage health care organizations to meet their obligations under HIPAA. Tim Noonan, a high-ranking official under Fontes Rainer, also expects it will bolster the agency's ability to offer guidance and technical assistance.

A budget increase "will give us a stronger hammer," Fontes Rainer said. "Enforcement ... stops the conduct, but is also a deterrent for others."

In July, HHS levied its first major fine on breaches since President Joe Biden took office, \$875,000 on Oklahoma State University's Center for Health Services. Agency investigators found that the center may not have reported a breach in a timely manner and that it also had failed to take steps to protect data.

And Fontes Rainer is pressing to increase fines following a legal setback at the end of the Trump administration.

In January 2021, the 5th Circuit Appeals Court struck down a \$4.3 million penalty that the Office for Civil Rights had assessed the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center over data breaches. The court called it "arbitrary" and "capricious," giving ammunition to critics of the office's enforcement efforts.

The Trump administration levied more than \$50 million in fines related to breaches over four years. But the director of the Office for Civil Rights at the time, Roger Severino, also moved to reduce fines for entities that weren't found in "willful neglect" of the privacy law or had taken corrective action, saying the office had misinterpreted the law.

'A cop on the side of the road'

If HHS were to further back off from enforcement, it could prompt more negligence, some experts said. More than half of the health care industry is "woefully underprepared" to protect against cyber threats, said Carter Groome, CEO of First Health Advisory, a health care risk management consulting firm.

At organizations with few resources, that lack of preparedness is understandable. But it's not at large health systems.

"We know of a CIO in a small rural facility ... he's also in charge of ... everything from snow shoveling to making sure the air conditioning is working," said Tom Leary, head of government relations at the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society. "But if they're well-resourced and they're not meeting their responsibilities, [enforcement] absolutely needs to be a part of the process."

Leary's group has found that cybersecurity budgets are often meager.

Stepped-up enforcement could prompt health care organizations to increase them.

Others are more skeptical. "HHS enforcement is like ninth on the list of reasons to have a good security program," Kirk Nahra, a privacy attorney at law firm WilmerHale said, adding that aggressive enforcement could hamper data sharing that the government is otherwise trying to encourage. "Why would I open up access to you ... if there's a risk it could go wrong and I could get hammered."

There are other ways government could help health care organizations improve their cybersecurity. Advocates for industry point to two key areas: cash for better defense systems and funding for workforce development.

John Riggi, the national adviser for cybersecurity and risk at the American Hospital Association, has called for federal support in training workers and grants to help organizations boost their security efforts. And in [testimony to Congress](#), Erik Decker, chief information security officer at hospital chain Intermountain Healthcare, called for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to look into developing payment models to "directly fund" cyber programs.

In contrast to King and Gallagher, many in the industry said they are encouraged by progress on information sharing. HHS' Health Sector Cybersecurity Coordination Center [has helped](#), they said, and the public-private 405(d) Program and Task Group has received high marks for its work to develop guidelines to help health care organizations defend themselves. Congress called for the collaboration in section 405(d) of a 2015 law.

Still, King and Gallagher in their letter to Becerra said they worried the information sharing was not robust enough, given the growth in cyberattacks. They called for an urgent briefing from HHS and suggested they'd be willing to propose funding and laws extending the agency new powers to take on the hackers.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Russia streaming platform suffers data leak
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/leading-russian-streaming-platform-suffers-data-leak-allegedly-impacting-44-million-users/
GIST	<p>Russian streaming giant START said on Sunday that the personal information of its customers was leaked during a cyberattack.</p> <p>The company did not disclose how many users were affected by the breach but according to the Russian Telegram channel Information Leaks — which first publicized the incident and posted alleged screenshots of leaked information — the 72 GB database contains data on 44 million customers.</p> <p>The leaked information includes usernames, email addresses, hashed passwords, IP addresses, users' countries of registration, subscription start and end dates, and the last login to the service.</p> <p>START, which sells films and TV shows in more than 174 countries, is one of many Russian companies that have suffered data leaks and hacks following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p>

The data breach allegedly affects viewers worldwide, including 24.6 million users from Russia, 2.3 million from Kazakhstan, 2.1 million from China, and 1.7 million from Ukraine.

The hackers claimed the data came from an exposed MongoDB database program, which contained the details of users who signed up on the website until September 22 of last year.

START said it has already fixed the vulnerability and closed access to the database. “The leaked data is of little interest to attackers,” the company wrote in a statement. “The most important information there is the users’ emails and phone numbers.”

Financial information, such as credit card numbers, were not included in the database, according to START. The company is not requiring users to change passwords because they are encrypted, it said.

Only a small portion of users (less than 2%) used first and last names during registration on the website, according to Ilya Braslavskiy, the company’s Data Science Lead. “These are not mandatory fields, so there is no motivation to add them,” he wrote on Telegram.

It’s unclear who is behind the attack or what motivated it — no hacking group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack on the service.

Earlier in July, Ukrainian hacktivists from the IT Army [hit](#) about 80 Russian cinemas with distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, which flood victims with junk traffic to make their websites unreachable.

In March, Anonymous hacktivists [breached](#) the Russian streaming services Wink and Ivi and broadcasted real footage from the war in Ukraine.

Ukrainian streaming services suffer from Russia’s cyberattacks as well. In June, for instance, pro-Russia hackers [attacked](#) the Ukrainian streaming service Oll.tv and replaced the broadcast of a football match with Russian propaganda.

Other popular streaming services, including Megogo and Sweet.tv, said they were mostly hit by DDoS attacks without significant impact.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Library supplier in ransomware attack
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/major-u-s-library-service-confirms-ransomware-attack-struggling-to-restore-affected-systems/
GIST	<p>Major library supplier Baker & Taylor is struggling to bring systems back online after a ransomware attack last week.</p> <p>The nearly 200-year-old company calls itself the largest supplier of library content, software and services to public and academic libraries in the U.S.</p> <p>Baker & Taylor published a notice on its website on Monday confirming that it had been hit with ransomware that began during the weekend of August 19. The company has been working to remediate the cyberattack since then.</p> <p>“Our IT team and outside experts are working nonstop to restore our systems,” the company explained.</p> <p>The company did not respond to requests for comment and no ransomware group has come forward to claim credit for the attack.</p> <p>In its first message announcing the attack on August 23, the company said several of its systems and applications were affected alongside the phone systems at its offices and its service centers.</p>

pic.twitter.com/QcFEEaALIL

— Baker and Taylor (@BakerandTaylor) [August 23, 2022](#)

It expected systems to be down for the week, but noted on Monday that systems are still down.

The company [released](#) a similar message the next day, noting that they had hired an outside cybersecurity firm to help deal with the attack.

Baker & Taylor offers libraries technological solutions as well as physical and digital content. It offers books, ebooks, audio books, music, videos and more.

Last month, publishing giant Macmillan similarly [struggled to recover](#) from a ransomware attack that crippled its ability to process orders and run its warehouses in several countries.

In April, the LockBit ransomware group [attacked popular German library service Onleihe](#), which allows users to rent and borrow e-books, electronic newspapers, magazines, audio books and music from more than 200 libraries across Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Denmark, Belgium and France.

Many of the websites connected to their platform — ID-Delivery, divibib.com, the divibib user forum, ekz.de, ekz.at, ekz.fr and certain catalog data — were affected by the attack.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Turkish malware infects devices in 11 nations
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/turkish-malware-used-to-infect-machines-in-11-countries-through-fake-google-translate-links/
GIST	<p>Turkish-speaking hackers are spreading crypto-mining malware through free software download sites, including one offering a fake Google Translate desktop app, according to new research.</p> <p>Cybersecurity firm Check Point on Monday said it discovered the campaign at the end of July and named it Nitrokod. The researchers said it may have infected thousands of devices with malware across 11 countries.</p> <p>Maya Horowitz, vice president of research at Check Point, said her team found a popular website offering imitations of PC applications, including Google Desktop, which include a cryptocurrency miner. The malware hijacks a device's processor and forces it to verify transactions of currency like Bitcoin.</p> <p>"The malicious tools can be used by anyone. They can be found by a simple web search, downloaded from a link, and installation is a simple double-click. We know that the tools are built by a Turkish-speaking developer," Horowitz said. "Currently, the threat we identified was unknowingly installing a cryptocurrency miner, which steals computer resources and leverages them for the attacker to monetize on."</p> <p>As Horowitz explained, one of the links that leads to a download of the malware is easily found through Google when users search "Google Translate Desktop download."</p> <p>The programs have a delayed mechanism that deploys the malware after several days or weeks while also deleting any trace of the original installation, which "allowed the campaign to successfully operate under the radar for years," the report said.</p> <p>"The malware is first executed almost a month after the Nitrokod program was installed," researchers wrote. "The infection chain continued after a long delay using a scheduled task mechanism, giving the attackers time to clear the evidence."</p> <p>Once the malware is finally downloaded, it connects to a command and control server and starts mining for cryptocurrency.</p>

	<p>Horowitz added that the perpetrator can easily choose to alter the final payload of the attack, changing it from a crypto-miner to, say, a ransomware or banking Trojan.</p> <p>According to Check Point, the software developer NitroKod has been active since 2019, offering popular applications that do not have official desktop versions. Many of NitroKod's programs can be found on free software sites like Softpedia and Uptodown.</p> <p>One of the most popular programs on NitroKod is the Google Translate desktop application. Google has never released a desktop application for Google Translate, which makes the corrupted NitroKod version one of the first links that shows up.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Oktapus threat group victimizes 130 firms
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/oktapus-victimize-130-firms/180487/
GIST	<p>Targeted attacks on Twilio and Cloudflare employees are tied to a massive phishing campaign that resulted in 9,931 accounts at over 130 organizations being compromised. The campaigns are tied to focused abuse of identity and access management firm Okta, which gained the threat actors the Oktapus moniker, by researchers.</p> <p>“The primary goal of the threat actors was to obtain Okta identity credentials and multi-factor authentication (MFA) codes from users of the targeted organizations,” wrote Group-IB researchers in a recent report. “These users received text messages containing links to phishing sites that mimicked the Okta authentication page of their organization.”</p> <p>Impacted were 114 US-based firms, with additional victims of sprinkled across 68 additional countries. Roberto Martinez, senior threat intelligence analyst at Group-IB, said the scope of the attacks is still an unknown. “The Oktapus campaign has been incredibly successful, and the full scale of it may not be known for some time,” he said.</p> <p>What the Oktapus Hackers Wanted</p> <p>The Oktapus attackers are believed to have begun their campaign by targeting telecommunications companies in hopes of winning access to potential targets’ phone numbers.</p> <p>While unsure exactly how threat actors obtained a list of phone numbers used in MFA-related attacks, one theory researchers posit is that Oktapus attackers began their campaign targeting telecommunications companies.</p> <p>“[A]ccording to the compromised data analyzed by Group-IB, the threat actors started their attacks by targeting mobile operators and telecommunications companies and could have collected the numbers from those initial attacks,” researchers wrote.</p> <p>Next, attackers sent phishing links to targets via text messages. Those links led to webpages mimicking the Okta authentication page used by the target’s employer. Victims were then asked to submit Okta identity credentials in addition to a multi-factor authentication (MFA) codes employees used to secure their logins.</p> <p>In an accompanying technical blog, researchers at Group-IB explain that the initial compromises of mostly software-as-a-service firms were a phase-one in a multi-pronged attack. Oktapus’ ultimate goal was to access company mailing lists or customer-facing systems in hopes of facilitating supply-chain attacks.</p> <p>In a possible related incident, within hours of Group-IB publishing its report late last week, the firm DoorDash revealed it was targeted in an attack with all the hallmarks of an Oktapus-style attack.</p> <p>Blast Radius: MFA Attacks</p>

	<p>In a blog post DoorDash revealed; “unauthorized party used the stolen credentials of vendor employees to gain access to some of our internal tools.” The attackers, according to the post, went on to steal personal information – including names, phone numbers, email and delivery addresses – from customers and delivery people.</p> <p>In the course of its campaign, the attacker compromised 5,441 MFA codes, Group-IB reported.</p> <p>“Security measures such as MFA can appear secure... but it is clear that attackers can overcome them with relatively simple tools,” researchers wrote.</p> <p>“This is yet another phishing attack showing how easy it is for adversaries to bypass supposedly secure multifactor authentication,” Roger Grimes, data-driven defense evangelist at KnowBe4, wrote in a statement via email. “It simply does no good to move users from easily phish-able passwords to easily phish-able MFA. It’s a lot of hard work, resources, time, and money, not to get any benefit.”</p> <p>To mitigate Oktapus-style campaigns, the researchers recommended good hygiene around URLs and passwords, and using FIDO2-compliant security keys for MFA.</p> <p>“Whatever MFA someone uses,” Grimes advised, “the user should be taught about the common types of attacks that are committed against their form of MFA, how to recognize those attacks, and how to respond. We do the same when we tell users to pick passwords but don’t when we tell them to use supposedly more secure MFA.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Hackers lose interest Ukraine-Russia war
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/third-party-hacking-groups-lose-interest-in-russia-ukraine-conflict-study-claims
GIST	<p>Theories that the war between Russia and Ukraine is rewriting modern warfare with the involvement of third-party cybercriminal groups and hacktivists may be overblown, a new research paper claims.</p> <p>In a study released this month, six academic researchers from the universities of Cambridge, Strathclyde and Edinburgh argue that while the onset of the war saw notable involvement from groups like the IT Army of Ukraine and others defacing websites or conducting denial-of-service attacks against Russian websites, as well as threats from ransomware groups and other cybercriminals groups on behalf of Russia, that activity has tailed off significantly in the months after the start of the invasion as many participants got “bored” and moved on.</p> <p>“Our findings indicate that the conflict briefly but significantly caught the attention of the low-level cybercrime community, with notable shifts in the geographical distribution of both defacement and DDoS attacks. However, the role of these players in so-called cyberwarfare is minor, and they do not resemble the ‘hacktivists’ imagined in popular criminological accounts,” wrote authors Anh V. Vu, Daniel R. Thomas, Ben Collier, Alice Hutchings, Richard Clayton and Ross Anderson.</p> <p>To reach their conclusions, the researchers collected evidence of more than 281,000 web defacement attacks and 1.7 million reflected denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks executed in the two months before the invasion and the four months following, as well as announcements posted on volunteer hacker forums and interviews with unaffiliated pro-Russia and pro-Ukraine hackers who took part in the attacks.</p> <p>The beginning of the war did kick off intense interest from groups like the IT Army, Anonymous and other volunteer partisan hackers who swore to extend the conflict to the digital arena by shutting down Russian or Ukrainian businesses, governments and critical infrastructure. Further, ransomware hacking groups like Conti made public pronouncements in support of the Russian government while threatening to attack critical infrastructure in Western countries who were opposed to invasion and funneling arms to Ukraine.</p>

The reliance on civilian hackers in a hot war has caused some consternation among U.S. officials, with both NSA Cybersecurity Director Rob Joyce and National Cyber Director Chris Inglis saying in recent months that the U.S. does not endorse vigilante hacktivism, with Joyce saying he worried it could undercut international efforts to pressure countries like Russia to be more accountable for the actions of ransomware groups and other cybercriminals operating within their own borders.

“I think all of us wanted to root for those folks. It was a little bit of a challenge that they were out there launching attacks on another country in an era where we’re trying to hold the Russians accountable for the attacks emanating out of their space, right?” said Joyce at the RSA Conference in San Francisco in June.

However, the researchers argue that alarmist predictions of civilian-directed cyberwar “have not come to pass” and much of the activity they did track amounted to small nuisance attacks against unaffiliated websites and organizations.

“Our analysis challenges ‘cyberwar’ narratives of a cybercrime underground producing organised, motivated, and technically skilled hacktivists. Instead, we find that most budding cyberwarriors used trivial attacks to take down meaningless minor targets and largely got bored after a couple of weeks,” the authors write.

It should be noted that not everybody agrees with the view put forward by the researchers that non-governmental hackers have gone quiet. Intel 471, a threat intelligence company that tracks the infrastructure, communications and activities of cybercriminal groups, has not observed a drop off in interest around the Ukraine-Russia war from non-governmental hackers, with Michael DeBolt, chief intelligence officer, telling SC Media “we are not seeing signs of this interest waning” in recent months.

“We are not seeing a meaningful decline in interest by activists who have aligned themselves to pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian causes,” said DeBolt. “Since the start of the war, some threat actors operating in the cybercrime underground have pivoted their motivation from purely financial gain to geo-political ends leveraging their tools, infrastructure, and capabilities to advance the cause of whatever side they have chosen.”

He did acknowledge that tracking this kind of activity and its impact can be difficult as it relies, in part, on corroboration from unreliable parties, and that on the whole the cybercrime underground has largely remained unaffected by the conflict and dominated by financially motivated actors who couldn’t care less about geopolitical or ideological goals.

The war has also seen unprecedented involvement from legitimate businesses in the West and other regions, though this assistance has largely been defensive in nature. Still, some have backed up the notion that offensive campaigns carried out by volunteer groups or legitimate businesses and individuals have attempted to impose costs on Russian society without the visibility or ground-level intelligence that nation-states and militaries use to pick strategic and relevant targets.

Oliver Tavakoli, chief technology officer for Vectra AI, which has offered free cybersecurity tooling and monitoring for organizations who may have their digital assets targeted in the fallout of the war, said the explosion of third-party hacks in the wake of the invasion has led to a diffusion of central control has led to “a weird situation where you’re worried about inbound vectors, [but] you’re also worried to a certain degree about becoming an outbound vector and becoming a legitimate target as part of that.”

“What we’ve started seeing, interestingly enough, is within our customer base — which is not in Ukraine — seeing sympathetic parties, employees using the infrastructure of our customers’ environment to start to try to attack what they view to be Russian targets, and without a really high-quality targeting capabilities and a clear understanding of what they’re doing,” Tavakoli told SC Media earlier this month. “So for example, you’d see a Russian website being hosted in a German web hosting company being attacked by servers within a customer network.”

HEADLINE	08/29 Ransomware damages to exceed \$30B
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-exceed-30bn-dollars-2023/
GIST	<p>Nearly half of breaches during the first six months of 2022 involved stolen credentials, Switzerland-based cybersecurity company Acronis reported in its Mid-Year Cyberthreat Report, published on August 24, 2022.</p> <p>It will come as no surprise to learn that the cybercriminals' prime goal in using these credentials is to launch ransomware attacks, which "continue to be the number one threat to large and medium-sized businesses, including government organizations," the report added.</p> <p>To extract these credentials, the attackers mainly use phishing techniques, with 600 malicious email campaigns that made their way across the internet in the first half of 2022, of which 58% of the emails were phishing attempts and 28% featured malware, found Acronis.</p> <p>The firm also states that, "as reliance on the cloud increases, attackers have homed in on different entryways to cloud-based networks." Cybercriminals now also target unpatched or software vulnerabilities to extract data, with a recent increased on Linux operating systems and managed service providers (MSPs) and their network of SMB customers.</p> <p>The third vector spotted by Acronis Cyber Protection Operation Centers is what it calls "non-traditional entry avenues" such as cryptocurrencies and decentralized finance (DeFi) systems.</p> <p>"Ransomware is worsening, even more so than we predicted," warns the Swiss firm, mentioning Conti and Lapsus gangs as the prime targets for international security services and expecting global ransomware damages to exceed \$30bn by 2023.</p> <p>"Increasing complexity in IT continues to lead to breaches and compromises highlighting the need for more holistic approaches to cyber-protection. [...] The current cybersecurity threat landscape requires a multi-layered solution that combines anti-malware, EDR, DLP, email security, vulnerability assessment, patch management, RMM, and backup capabilities all in one place," the report stated.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Kiwi Farms offline amid DDoS attack
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/kiwi-farms-offline-ddos-attack-hosting-issues/
GIST	<p>Kiwi Farms is a website that hosts user-generated content and discussion forums. The site has been accused of doxing, harassment, and cyberbullying. Kiwi Farms has been banned from several social media platforms and domain providers.</p> <p>However, since August 26th, 2022, Kiwi Farms has been offline and displaying a note uploaded by its administrators which explains why the website is down and how they have been suffering DDoS (distributed denial of service) and other forms of cyber attacks.</p> <p>The forum is down because upstream ISPs have blackholed routes to our network. When a computer tries to connect to our servers, the global network has no way to reach them. This is a deliberate action from our host. They are not answering my emails and I do not know why this has been done. <i>Kiwi Farms</i></p> <p>According to Kiwi Farms, prior to service disruption, the forum was targeted by a "DDoS attack and other forms of attempted network intrusion." The forum's administrators believe that it was due to these malicious attacks and to protect other customers the ISP was forced to block their site.</p> <p>So Why is Kiwi Farms Such a Target? The website is known for doxxing – or publishing personal information – of people, it deems "incels" (involuntary celibates), feminists, social justice warriors, and others. Some believe the site goes out of its way to harass and humiliate people.</p>

On August 5, 2022, Clara Sorrenti (aka Keffals), a Twitch streamer and transgender activist from Canada was swatted and arrested in London, Ontario. Days later, Keffals' hotel address and location were leaked on Kiwi Farms.

Given the kind of content, Kiwi Farms publishes, it's not surprising that the site would be targeted by those who don't agree with its tactics.

Who DDoSd Kiwi Farms?

Although it is unclear who was behind the DDoS attack against Kiwi Farms, @YourAnonNews, the largest social media representative of the Anonymous movement also tweeted about the incident. However, they told *Hackread.com* that at this moment there is no confirmation whether Anonymous hacktivists were behind the attack.

Kiwi Farms and Cloudflare

Cloudflare, as we know it, provides security and DDoS protection to websites. It also provides services to Kiwi Farms and since the site has been accused of doxing or publishing private information about individuals without their consent; its critics want the security firm to remove its protection.

For your information, [in August 2017](#), Cloudflare was quick to remove the racist and neo-nazi website DailyStormer from its platform. [In August 2019](#), the infamous messageboard 8chan was also accused of spreading hateful content against minorities, and people of color got booted off by its hosting company Voxility, while Cloudflare removed its protection soon after.

However, at this moment there has been no statement from Cloudflare over the content Kiwi Farms has been accused of posting.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Exploiting DeFi bugs: steal cryptocurrency
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fbi-hackers-increasingly-exploit-defi-bugs-to-steal-cryptocurrency/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is warning investors that cybercriminals are increasingly exploiting security vulnerabilities in Decentralized Finance (DeFi) platforms to steal cryptocurrency.</p> <p>"The FBI has observed cyber criminals exploiting vulnerabilities in the smart contracts governing DeFi platforms to steal investors' cryptocurrency," the federal law enforcement agency said.</p> <p>"The FBI encourages investors who suspect cyber criminals have stolen their DeFi investments to contact the FBI via the Internet Crime Complaint Center or their local FBI field office."</p> <p>The public service announcement, published on the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) today, adds that out of roughly \$1.3 billion in cryptocurrency stolen between January and March 2022, snatched almost 97 percent of it from DeFi platforms.</p> <p>Per FBI's calculations, this amounts to a significant increase from 72 percent in 2021 and approximately 30 percent in 2020, respectively.</p> <p>Attackers have used various methods to hack and steal cryptocurrency from DeFi platforms, including initiating flash loans that trigger exploits in the platforms' smart contracts and exploiting signature verification flaws in their token bridge to withdraw all investments.</p> <p>The agency has also observed cybercriminals manipulating crypto price pairs by exploiting chains of vulnerabilities, including the DeFi platforms' use of a single price oracle and then conducting leveraged trades to bypass slippage checks.</p>

The FBI recommends investors take precautions before making an investment decision, such as to:

- Research DeFi platforms, protocols, and smart contracts before investing and be aware of the specific risks involved in DeFi investments.
- Ensure the DeFi investment platform has conducted one or more code audits performed by independent auditors. A code audit typically involves a thorough review and analysis of the platform's underlying code to identify vulnerabilities or weaknesses in the code that could negatively impact the platform's performance.
- Be alert to DeFi investment pools with extremely limited timeframes to join and rapid deployment of smart contracts, especially without the recommended code audit.
- Be aware of the potential risk posed by crowdsourced solutions to vulnerability identification and patching. Open source code repositories allow unfettered access to all individuals, including those with nefarious intentions.

DeFi platforms under heavy targeting

FBI's warning follows a Chainalysis report from April that highlighted how, according to Q1 2022 data, DeFi cryptocurrency platforms are now more targeted than ever.

In most incidents, the attackers rely on exploiting security vulnerabilities in their code or a security breach on the platform, allowing them to siphon cryptocurrency to addresses under their control.

According to Chainalysis, threat actors behind such attacks have laundered most of the stolen assets in 2022 using risky laundering services such as illegal exchanges and [coin tumblers](#) on the dark web.

While in 2021, around 25% of all cryptocurrency stolen from DeFi platforms was later recovered and [returned to the victims](#), this year no DeFi-stolen funds have been returned, showing that attackers are less interested in securing their stolen assets.

In April, the FBI [linked](#) the [hack of Axie Infinity's Ronin network bridge](#), now the largest crypto hack ever, to the Lazarus and BlueNorOff (aka APT38) North Korean threat groups.

The previous most significant theft of cryptocurrency was the [\\$611 million hack](#) of the decentralized cross-chain protocol and network Poly Network in August 2021.

"Cyber criminals seek to take advantage of investors' increased interest in cryptocurrencies, as well as the complexity of cross-chain functionality and open source nature of DeFi platforms," further [warned](#) the FBI today.

"Investors should make their own investment decisions based on their financial objectives and financial resources and, if in any doubt, should seek advice from a licensed financial adviser."

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HEADLINE	08/29 Crypto miners latest techniques
SOURCE	https://cybersecurity.att.com/blogs/labs-research/crypto-miners-latest-techniques?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Executive summary</p> <p>Crypto miners are determined in their objective of mining in other people's resources. Proof of this is one of the latest samples identified with AT&T Alien Labs, with at least 100 different loaders and at least 4 different stages to ensure their miner and backdoor run smoothly in the infected systems.</p> <p>Key takeaways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attackers have been sending malicious attachments, with a special emphasis on Mexican institutions and citizens.• The techniques observed in these samples are known but still effective to keep infecting victims with their miners. Reviewing them assists in reminding defenders the current trends and how to improve their defenses.

- The wide variety of loaders in conjunction with the staged delivery of the miner and backdoor malwares, shows how determined the attackers are to successfully deliver their payloads.

Analysis

Crypto miners have been present in the threat landscape for some years, since an attacker identified the opportunity of leveraging victim's CPUs to mine cryptocurrencies for them. Despite the current rough patch in the world of cryptocurrencies, these miners are still present and will be in the foreseeable future.

As seen in the current analysis, unlike IoT malwares, which also attempt to reach the biggest number of infected devices as possible, these miners target victims through phishing samples. The techniques used by these malwares are usually focused on reaching execution, avoiding detection to run under the radar and gaining persistence to survive any reboot.

A new miner sample showed up in April on AT&T Alien Labs radar, with a wide range of different loaders aiming to execute it in infected systems up to this day. The loaders were initially delivered to the victims through an executable disguised like a spreadsheet. For example, one of the samples (fd5131645025e199caa142c12cef34b344437a0f58306f9b66c35d32618665ba) carries a Microsoft Excel icon, but its file extension corresponds to an executable.

A wide range of decoy documents were found associated with this miner, many of them associated with Mexican civilians: exam results, dentist results, Mexican Governmental documents, Mexican Social Security, Tax returns, etc.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Telegram-powered news outlet waging war
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/february-morning-russia-ukraine-war/
GIST	<p>ON THE EVENING of August 20, Russian TV pundit and conspiracy theorist Darya Dugina was killed on the outskirts of Moscow when a powerful explosion ripped apart her Toyota Land Cruiser. Dugina was a vocal supporter of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the daughter of fascist philosopher and writer Alexander Dugin, nicknamed "Putin's brain" thanks to his perceived ties to Russian president Vladimir Putin. According to Russian authorities, a remote-controlled "explosive device," presumably installed in her car, went off at around 9 pm local time.</p> <p>News of Dugina's assassination spread like wildfire through social media, most notably on the instant messaging service Telegram, where it was shared approvingly by a vast network of Russian and Ukrainian channels. But in the hours that followed, it became clear that one channel, operated by the media outlet Utro Fevralya, or February Morning, is more than just a place to share the news. It aims to play a key role in the story.</p> <p>Created by exiled former Russian MP and dissident Ilya Ponomarev, February Morning was the first to report on a group claiming responsibility for Dugina's death. Ponomarev himself took to YouTube, where February Morning airs its shows, claiming that the perpetrators were a little-known Russian resistance group called the National Republican Army. According to Ponomarev, an all-out war against "Putinism" had just begun.</p> <p>While the National Republican Army's involvement remains unconfirmed, Ponomarev's announcement crystallized February Morning's role as the center of gravity of a growing guerilla movement to spark revolution in Russia. The movement's ecosystem includes activists and saboteurs of all types, from anarchists to fascists, connected through a network of Telegram channels and a singular goal: overthrowing Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>Making History</p> <p>ON A SUN-DRENCHED balcony overlooking a busy street in downtown Kyiv, 48-year-old Evgeni Lesnoy smokes a final cigarette before going back on the air. The seasoned journalist is one of the faces of February Morning, which he joined shortly after its creation following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the early hours of February 24. "Because of my friends and relatives who stayed in Russia, I had been closely</p>

following the events there prior to February 24,” Lesnoy says in Russian. After his outspoken condemnation of the war in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea cost him his friends and, ultimately, his job, the journalist left Russia for Ukraine in 2015 and has been living with his husband in Kyiv ever since.

“When I was told that this project existed, I figured that this is where I needed to be,” he says, gesturing towards the TV studio in the next room. “Because I understand the context of what is happening inside Russia: I was born there, and I understand how people there think.”

Ponomarev, February Morning’s founder, is the only member of the Russian Duma to have voted against the 2014 annexation of Crimea. After the vote, he became persona non grata in Putin’s Russia, so he and his family fled to Ukraine’s capital city and started a new life. “For quite a long time, I had wanted to create a media aimed at a Russian audience, and that would broadcast from Kyiv,” he tells WIRED over Signal. “I tried to raise money for what I thought would be a Russian-language Al-Jazeera for maybe a year.” The venture was unsuccessful. But when Russian tanks crossed into Ukraine, the former MP and father of two joined the Territorial Defense in Kyiv, and the project took on new urgency. “After the first couple of days, many of my friends started telling me that now might be the time to revisit the idea of a media targeting Russians.”

The living room of the 18th-century apartment in which February Morning has taken residence is home to its television studio with a semicircular stage lit with a bluish light. Two screens broadcast in the background. When presenting the day’s show, Lesnoy sits before a small table draped with a white and blue tricolor flag—the symbol of the Russian opposition to the invasion—and that of Ukraine.

Broadcast on YouTube, the professionally produced daily programs try to counter the official Russian narrative surrounding the war, reporting on the atrocities committed by the “occupiers” against the Ukrainian population. “Putin’s supporters and apologists have big media organizations and prime-time news shows,” says Lesnoy. “We want to give a voice to those who oppose the war.”

Which is what Ponomarev did on August 21, when he claimed on air that the National Republican Army assassinated Dugina—an act he described as “legitimate.” He also read the group’s purported manifesto, which called on all Russians to join the ranks of the National Republican Army and vow to destroy all those who have “usurped their power.”

February Morning’s insights into the domestic resistance movement in Russia stem from its 27 regional outlets, each with its own Telegram channel where activists and journalists mingle to gather and share news of anti-Putin actions. A binational team of around 70 journalists, technicians, and activists operates covertly in the far-flung regions of Russia and in Kyiv. In addition to its studio in Ukraine’s capital, the network brazenly broadcasts from Moscow. “I don’t know how long the studio there will be able to operate, but even if the FSB shows up at the door and shuts us down, there will be another one,” says Ponomarev.

Whereas most media outlets only report the story, February Morning intends to be part of it. “We are referring to ourselves as the Russian ‘NEXTA,’ the Belarusian resource that played a key role in the protests two years ago following the reelection of Alexander Lukashenko,” says Ponomarev, referring to Belarus’ autocratic leader. “We want to be the resource that will play a critical role in the future revolutionary changes in the country.”

To this end, Ponomarev and his team have set up a Telegram channel known as Rospartizan, which has become an aggregator for information pertaining to the resistance to Putin and the war in Ukraine as well as a key recruitment tool. Every day, Rospartizan relays the latest developments across Russia, from the torching of a military recruitment office to the unfurling of an antiwar banner in front of the Russian Ministry of Defense building in Moscow.

According to Ponomarev, representatives of the National Republican Army first made contact with him through Rospartizan, a testament to the channel’s growing notoriety. “We are providing, in my opinion, the most comprehensive news stream on what is going on in Russian regions, in terms of acts of sabotage

and the actual resistance,” says Ponomarev. The National Republican Army’s manifesto concludes, “stay in contact with us through the Rospartizan Telegram channel.”

With more than 26,000 followers, Rospartizan embraces anyone who’s anti-Putin, no matter their political ideology—a feature, not a bug, according to Ponomarev, a former Communist Party member and self-described “social globalist.”

“I am right now not only reaching out, but very actively interacting with not only my friends on the left side of the political spectrum,” he says, “but also with people on the far-right, who we are usually fighting with.”

The Enemy of My Enemy

ROMAN POPKOV, THE former head of the Moscow branch of the National-Bolshevik party, falls into that far-right camp. Popkov used to be a member of the influential Russian National Unity, a now-defunct neo-Nazi group responsible for a string of racist crimes, before joining the political party founded by controversial Russian writer, poet, and dissident Eduard Limonov, who sought to unite far-left and far-right radicals on the same platform.

In 2006, after years of harassment by Russian security forces, Popkov was arrested and spent more than two years in pretrial detention in the infamous Butyrka prison. The European Court of Human Rights ruled that his detention was illegal, and his arrest is widely considered to have been motivated by his political activism.

Popkov, now residing in Ukraine, works as a journalist for a number of independent media outlets, and is the head of a recently launched media project called Poslezavtra, or “The Day After Tomorrow.” An “old friend” of Ponomarev, Popkov has featured extensively on February Morning’s shows and took part in the broadcast that followed Dugina’s assassination.

“We are covering direct actions targeting the military and the apparatus of political repression of Putin’s regime,” Popkov says over the phone. “First of all, we are trying to inspire people, to get them to act, and second, we inform and report on what is being done.”

Like Ponomarev, Popkov stresses that activists’ ideologies are not as important as a willingness to defy Putin’s regime and to oppose the war in Ukraine.

“Our collective unites people opposed to Putin’s regime, with different political views and ideologies,” says Popkov. “At the moment, it’s not that important if one is an anarchist, a nationalist, or a liberal as, since Russia is not a democracy, we have no representation in parliament, and can’t vote for our candidates.”

According to Popkov, acts of sabotage in Russia are mostly the work of small-scale far-right and far-left groups, the most famous of those being the Anarcho-Communist Combat Organization, or BO-AK. The organization rose to prominence after it sabotaged the railway leading to a Russian military arsenal in the small town of Kirzach, 100 km east of Moscow. The group shared photos of the sabotage on their own Telegram channel, which quickly spread to other anti-Putin channels, including Rospartizan, and was soon featured on February Morning’s broadcast.

Yet even the staunch anarchists of the BO-AK acknowledge the need to reach out to the other side of the political spectrum. “Most of our contacts are from our ideological camp, but not all,” an anonymous representative of the group tells WIRED. “We believe that alliances with different forces are necessary in our struggle.”

The anarchists of the BO-AK consider direct actions and acts of sabotage as the best way to kickstart the social revolution, a view shared by many members of Rospartizan. In addition to two sabotage operations targeting military railways, the BO-AK claims to have set fire to a cell phone tower in the Belgorod region “in order to damage Putin’s army communications in Ukraine.”

“Only those who can back it with their actions can call themselves the opposition,” an anonymous contributor to Rospartizan says over Telegram, “be them a Molotov cocktail thrown at a military recruitment office, a wire strung across train tracks, or a gas canister taken to the car of a regime collaborator.”

Dangerous Cocktails

INSPIRED BY THE Belarusian resistance to Lukashenko and the protestors’ innovative use of Telegram, Popkov, Ponomarev, and activists like the anarchists of BO-AK have turned to social media to organize, recruit, and incite people to act against the war and Putin’s increasingly authoritarian regime.

“Telegram is a less censored, more intelligent, and politicized social network. A large part of our immediate target audience is present here—people who are potentially interested in radical politics,” says the BO-AK. “This is where lies the usefulness of social networks for campaigning and education—they are an excellent channel for broadcasting and communicating.”

Antiwar activists in Ukraine and in Russia have taken full advantage of the relative anonymity Telegram provides. A website known as Ostanovi Vagony, or “Stop the Wagon,” and its associated Telegram channel aim to educate Russian would-be partisans on the safest, most effective ways to sabotage the railway system. Meanwhile, a Telegram channel created in late May called Gromko (“loud” in Russian) creates sleek infographics explaining how to make a Molotov cocktail—described as the best way to disable the car of a Putin sympathizer—or how to deface the regime’s propaganda posters.

This material is regularly shared by Ponomarev’s Rospartizan, which has become a central conduit for guerrilla efforts to rally new recruits, spread information and news, and, purportedly, to facilitate the assassination of a high-profile regime collaborator. In an interview with Russian independent media Meduza, Ponomarev claimed to have known in advance that “something was going to happen” ahead of Dugina’s assassination. He further claimed that he helped the National Republican Army exfiltrate Natalya Volk, the woman whom Russian security services named as the main suspect in her death: “Sometimes people need to be saved from FSB persecution, they need to be pulled out of Russia—we pull them out.”

Telegram did not respond to WIRED’s request for comment.

While unconfirmed, the number of acts of sabotage targeting military and state infrastructure in Russia appears to grow weekly. According to Russian independent media Insider, there have been more than 20 attacks on military registration and enlistment offices in Russia (which were reported by the media and Telegram channels), most of which were arson. “There were no similar incidents last year,” notes Insider journalist Alisa Zemlyanskaya, writing under a pseudonym. Meanwhile, an estimated 63 freight trains derailed in Russia between March and June, a significant increase compared to the same period last year.

Russian authorities, eager to downplay the significance of the apparent sabotage efforts, have blamed those incidents on the poor condition of the railway system. The scale of guerrilla attacks on Russian entities remains, therefore, difficult to assess.

“When it comes to railway sabotage especially, it’s difficult, or even impossible, to tell if it’s sabotage, or if it’s an accident due to a technical problem, or to the incompetence of the authorities,” says Popkov.

According to the BO-AK—whose members signed the sabotaged section of rail in Kirzach with the name of their group and the link to its Telegram channel—“that’s because many guerrilla groups do not leave any message or position themselves in the media in any way.”

“In any case, every week there are several reports of railway sabotage, the destruction of power lines, and other acts of resistance,” says the group. “This suggests that the guerrilla movement is not a mass movement, but a fairly large-scale one.”

Russian security services are quick to blame infiltrated Ukrainian saboteurs for these attacks. Regardless of who's behind them, acts of sabotage continue unabated: On August 17, yet another freight train derailed near Mogilev, in Belarus, while last Wednesday, a man threw two Molotov cocktails at the regional administration building in Oryol, in western Russia.

Fire-bombing a car or derailling a Russian train can, of course, carry significant penalties. But even less extreme activities are dangerous, especially in light of a slew of new repressive Russian laws. In July, lawmakers updated Russia's Criminal Code to crack down on working with "foreign states and organizations," public activities "directed against the security of the state," and the production and public display of "Nazi paraphernalia or symbols." Because Putin has repeatedly claimed, baselessly, that Ukraine was run by a clique of drug addicts and Nazis and cited "denazification" as one of the primary motivators of his invasion, this last amendment could potentially land an antiwar protestor waving a Ukrainian flag in prison.

According to Russian independent media OVD-Info, authorities in Russia detained some 16,500 people between February and July for having taken part in protests or actions against the war.

Activists and dissidents both in Russia and abroad expose themselves to retaliation from Putin's regime—a fact that they are acutely aware of. "I'm a reasonable person, I don't think I'm invulnerable or immortal," Ponomarev says. "So I do understand that there are issues with security and everything. But I have done a lot of effort to protect myself and the place where I live, as well as the way I move across the city." Those concerns have been heightened following Dugina's assassination and Ponomarev's subsequent declarations. On August 21, a member of the Russian government proposed a contest for the best video or photo of the dissident politician "crawling on broken legs and apologizing while spitting his teeth."

"I'm not going to pretend that I am not scared at all," says February Morning's Lesnoy after his last interview of the day had ended. "But I live in Ukraine, where Putin is waging war. Everybody here is at risk."

When asked about their motivation for joining the resistance and potentially exposing themselves to repression, an anonymous contributor to Rospartizan summed it up simply: "Let us use the platitude, 'who else if not us?'"

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HEADLINE	08/29 FTC sues data broker over geolocation data
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/aug/29/ftc-sues-kochava-tracking-privacy-data
GIST	<p>The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) on Monday sued Idaho-based data broker Kochava for selling geolocation data from hundreds of millions of mobile devices that could be used to track consumers.</p> <p>The FTC said consumer data could be used to trace people's movements to and from sensitive locations including "reproductive health clinics, places of worship, homeless and domestic violence shelters, and addiction recovery facilities".</p> <p>The problem gained interest after a supreme court ruling in June overturned the Roe v Wade decision that guaranteed a constitutional right to an abortion. Since then, privacy advocates and the public have called for more limits to the data tech companies collect over concerns that police or other entities could access customers' search history, geolocation and other information revealing pregnancy plans.</p> <p>But the lawsuit, which seeks to halt Kochava's sale of sensitive geolocation data and require the company to delete the sensitive geolocation information it has collected, addresses issues beyond tracking those pursuing abortion care. In the suit, FTC alleges the company allows people to customize their data feed to filter for mobile devices at specific times and locations. This would make it easy to track a user over time or try to, for instance, find out where they live.</p>

“For example, the location of a mobile device at night likely corresponds to the consumer’s home address,” the suit said. “Public or other records may identify the name of the owner or resident of a particular address.”

In fact, the company advertises “Household Mapping” as one of the ways to use its data.

Until recently, the company also made its data available for purchase by the public and “allowed anyone with little effort to obtain a large sample of sensitive data and use it without restriction”, the FTC alleges. For instance, a sample of Kochava’s data – which included 327,480,000 rows and 11 columns of data, corresponding to more than 61,803,400 unique mobile devices – was available on a trial basis on the Amazon Web Services Marketplace as of June 2022 for anyone to access.

Kochava said the FTC “has a fundamental misunderstanding” of how the data marketplace business works and the company works in compliance with all rules and laws, including those specific to privacy.

“We hoped to have productive conversations that led to effective solutions with the FTC about these complicated and important issues and are open to them in the future,” said Brian Cox, general manager of Kochava. Unfortunately, the only outcome the FTC desired was a settlement that had no clear terms or resolutions and redefined the problem into a moving target. Real progress to improve data privacy for consumers will not be reached through flamboyant press releases and frivolous litigation.”

“Where consumers seek out health care, receive counseling, or celebrate their faith is private information that shouldn’t be sold to the highest bidder,” said Samuel Levine, director of the FTC’s Bureau of Consumer Protection. “The FTC is taking Kochava to court to protect people’s privacy and halt the sale of their sensitive geolocation information.”

The FTC said Kochava buys vast troves of location information from other data brokers across hundreds of millions of mobile devices that is packaged into customized data. They then sell that data to clients including retailers looking at foot traffic.

The Kochava data FTC reviewed “included precise, timestamped location data collected from more than 61m unique mobile devices in the previous week”. The FTC lawsuit said Kochava has asserted that it offers “rich geo data spanning billions of devices globally”.

Privacy advocates and experts have pushed regulators to address the dangers that the data broker industry poses, particularly to marginalized communities. In Chicago and Colorado, a group of immigrant rights organizations, including Mijente, has fought to [expose and close loopholes](#) that the US Customs and Immigration Enforcement Agency (Ice) uses to get around local and state sanctuary policies by buying location and other information from data brokers instead of law enforcement agencies. But the fight against the data broker industry – and tech companies’ [general data collection](#) – has [garnered mass appeal](#) after the supreme court’s decision.

In July, Alphabet’s Google said it would delete location data showing when users visit an abortion clinic, after concerns that a digital trail could inform law enforcement if someone terminates a pregnancy illegally. Earlier this month, the FTC said it is considering writing rules to better protect Americans’ privacy and crack down on businesses that collect far-reaching personal information without consumers’ full understanding.

Congressional committees have also reached a compromise on the American Data Privacy and Protection Act, which would limit the data broker industry by putting protections around sensitive data like geolocation and by enabling people to demand companies delete data collected on them. However, [as Politico reported](#), the data broker industry has ramped up its lobbying in response to the bill in an effort to soften some of the data-sharing restrictions.

“This is a great step, but it’s just a first step,” said Albert Fox Cahn, the founder of the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project. “Let’s be clear: it’s not just one abusive vendor, it’s a whole abusive

	industry. We need to systematically shut down the market for Americans' location data. No one should have to fear that these shadowy companies will track our most intimate moments and sell them to the highest bidder. And the FTC needs to also target the police departments that misuse this ad data."
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HEADLINE	08/29 Kent apartment shooting: 1 dead, 2 injured
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/1-man-dead-2-in-critical-condition-after-shooting-in-kent-apartment-unit
GIST	<p>KENT, Wash. — One man died and two others are in critical condition after all three were shot in an apartment on Sunday night.</p> <p>According to the Kent Police Department, the three men — all 23 years old — were at the Irwin apartment complex at 25822 110th Ave SE. Police received reports of multiple gunshots.</p> <p>Upon arriving, officers found the three men with gunshot wounds and "initiated life saving aid." All three victims were taken to Harborview Medical Center, where one died.</p> <p>Witnesses said the three men were inside the apartment preparing dinner when gunshots were heard, police said.</p> <p>There is no information about a potential suspect.</p> <p>Kent detectives are investigating the incident.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 SPL Wi-Fi hot spot program
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/how-seattle-public-librarys-wi-fi-hotspot-program-has-fared/
GIST	<p>Long before the pandemic started, the Seattle Public Library understood the need for internet and Wi-Fi access.</p> <p>In a 2013 study about technology access and adoption in Seattle, the city found 15% of 4,315 Seattle residents couldn't access the internet, despite resources such as community center and library computers.</p> <p>These residents were disproportionately unhoused, unemployed, low-income, disabled, older and those who didn't pursue higher education, and reported their most common barriers as high service cost and slow internet speed.</p> <p>Two years later, SPL launched the Wi-Fi hot spot circulation program as a way to address the lack of affordable, widespread internet access.</p> <p>While anyone with a library card can rent a hot spot for up to 21 days from their nearest library branch, outreach hot spots can be loaned out for much longer.</p> <p>For example, clients of API Chaya — an SPL community partner that primarily supports survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking — can check out hot spots for up to six months, according to Peter Seith, the group's office and technology coordinator.</p> <p>By the end of the hot spot program's first year, these devices were checked out at least 2,300 times.</p> <p>While SPL's year-long closure caused a dip in checkouts in 2020, Seattle residents actually used their checked-out hot spots even more during the pandemic.</p> <p>Kate Sellers, SPL's technical manager, believes the number of general circulation hot spots is enough to keep up with demand.</p>

In 2021, additional general circulation hot spots shortened the waiting time for a hot spot from 10 to “four or five weeks.” A person who regularly uses hot spots will usually place a hold for one, then place a hold for another as soon as the first one arrives at their local branch. The second device will then come a few weeks after the person has to return the first hot spot.

Residents and community partners generally agree the hot spot program has been beneficial. It currently [has a rating of 4.5 stars](#) on its website, averaged among 418 reviews as of August 17.

One of SPL’s community partners is the Low Income Housing Institute tiny Villages, where SPL installed long-term hot spots.

“While obviously more hot spots would be better, for the most part, [there are] enough hot spots to get full coverage,” said Hattie Rhodes, village operations manager at the Whittier Heights tiny house village.

Having the internet is “absolutely necessary” for residents, not only to secure basic needs but also to transition to permanent housing, Rhodes emphasized. Applying for identification cards, social security and driver’s licenses require filling out online forms.

Villa Comunitaria, another SPL community partner that mainly serves Spanish-speaking communities, runs skills training classes where participants often utilize the loaned hot spots to learn how to use email, Google Drive, Microsoft Word and social media, among other basic computer and internet skills.

The program was initially funded by two Google grants and the Seattle City Council’s general fund. Currently it is supported by the 2019 library levy, the SPL Foundation, the 2012 library levy, federal COVID-19 relief and departments such as the city of Seattle’s Human Services Department.

While the program is satisfying current needs and providing necessary infrastructure, Sellers cautioned against advocating for increasing program funding for things like additional hot spots. Even if partners like LIHI tiny house villages received more hot spots, factors such as rain and extreme temperature affect hot spot internet speed and quality.

Support for the outreach team could be increased, Sellers said, but more emphasis should be placed on longer-term, sustainable goals. A big objective of the program is to give patrons temporary internet services and work with them to apply for more stable, low-cost internet providers.

“The ultimate solution,” Sellers urged, “is to have broadband access more widely and permanently” across the city.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Online creators as de facto therapists?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/08/29/mental-health-tiktok-instagram/
GIST	<p>Issey Moloney signed up for therapy through Britain’s National Health Service when she was just 12 years old. She was on a waiting list for four years.</p> <p>In the meantime, social media helped her feel less alone, says the now 17-year-old, who lives in London. She connected with people online as the pandemic isolated her from real-life friends. Eventually, she started making her own content. Now, she has 5.9 million TikTok followers — about 85% of them young women between the ages of 14 and 18 — and a collection of videos about friends, relationships and mental health.</p> <p>Some of her clips are general, such as a short ode to the relationship between mentally ill people and pasta, while others address real diagnoses, such as “signs you might have BPD,” or borderline personality disorder. Sometimes, people ask her to address particular conditions. She tries to do research for at least a week, checking websites and message boards and interviewing by direct message people who have the particular diagnosis. She adds disclaimers: “Everyone deals with [panic attacks] differently and not all of them feel the same.”</p>

She has no official training and often talks about feelings that are to some degree universal, such as anxiety and depression. Commenters occasionally accuse her of pathologizing just “being a teenager” or encouraging self-diagnosis.

In real life, mental health information and care are sparse. In the U.S., 1 in 3 counties do not have a single licensed psychologist, according to the American Psychological Association, and Americans say cost is a top barrier to seeking mental health help. On the internet, however, mental health tips are everywhere: TikTok videos with #mentalhealth in the caption have earned more than 43.9 billion views, according to the analytics company Sprout Social, and mentions of mental health on social media are increasing year by year.

The growing popularity of the subject means that creators of mental health content are filling a health care gap. But social media apps are not designed to prioritize accurate, helpful information, critics say, just whatever content draws the biggest reaction. Young people could see their deepest struggles become fodder for advertisers and self-promoters. With no road map even for licensed professionals, mental health creators are defining their own ethics.

“I don’t want to give anyone the wrong advice,” Moloney says. “I’ve met some [followers] who’ve just started crying and saying ‘thank you’ and stuff like that. Even though it seems small, to someone else, it can have a really big impact.”

As rates of depression and anxiety spiked during the pandemic and options for accessible care dwindled, creators shared an array of content, including first-person accounts of life with mental illness and videos listing symptoms of bipolar disorder. In many cases, their follower counts ballooned.

Creators and viewers alike say the content is helpful. They also acknowledge that embracing it carries risks such as misinformation and harmful self-diagnosis. Some high-profile accounts have been criticized for sharing advice not backed by most professionals. Many creators sell courses and books or enter advertising partnerships, opening the door to conflicts of interest.

Much online content simply tells listeners what they want to hear, creators say, and relatively rare conditions such as narcissistic personality disorder receive outsized attention, with commenters diagnosing their least-favorite people. And because of algorithms, people who show interest in this type of content see more of it.

Sometimes, creators find themselves dealing with a flood of messages from followers or struggling to control how audiences interpret their content.

“It’s definitely strange seeing myself drawn into a commodifiable object for people to define ‘mental illness’ by, and to a certain extent for me to be eaten up by the algorithm that encourages people to go down this pipeline,” said Rayne Fisher-Quann, who openly talks about her struggles with mental illness with her 225,000 followers on TikTok. “There absolutely is a concerted effort to really capitalize on mental illness and particularly on young women’s mental illness. It’s a very marketable commodity right now.”

Although professional organizations such as the American Counseling Association issue some social media guidelines, they tend to misunderstand or ignore the demands of the creator economy, therapists said. Nonprofessionals, meanwhile, can say almost anything with few consequences. Young people cannot always tell the difference between experts and hacks, creators say.

“Even if a therapist isn’t on social media, their clients are, and those clients are impacted by what they see on social media, and they’re bringing that directly into the session,” said Sadaf Siddiqi, an Instagram creator and licensed therapist.

Many creators are not experts, and many say they’ve previously been failed by experts.

Fisher-Quann's inbox is full of the types of questions you'd whisper to a best friend at midnight: Do these difficult feelings mean I have depression? Does having a queer sexual experience mean I'm gay?

If the question touches on something she's experienced, she might respond. Other times, the messages go unanswered, said the 21-year-old writer and cultural critic. People occasionally message her to say they're contemplating suicide, and she says she directs them toward professional resources. But it hurts to know they might not receive the real-world help they need, Fisher-Quann said.

"Because of that institutional failure, I don't feel comfortable basically telling people to institutionalize themselves," she said. "But I'm also very critical of capitalistic platforms where people present themselves as experts and offer advice that could ultimately be very myopic."

Deciding who counts as an expert isn't always straightforward. Klara Kernig, a creator with 159,000 followers on Instagram, describes herself in her biography as a "people-pleasing expert." She earned that title through experience, she said.

After dropping out of her dream Ph.D. program against her family's wishes, she said, Kernig started learning about codependency, trauma and "people-pleasing" from books and the internet. Now she's a lot healthier, she said, and makes her own mental health content, including "5 things we think are nice that are people-pleasing behaviors."

"I don't want to discredit therapists, but I also want to say there are other ways of educating people and of having that information," she said. "Maybe I'll even put something out there that's wrong, and then I hope that my community and also the therapists there point that out to me in a loving way."

Some creators take it upon themselves to challenge content that is not supported by research. Psychology professor Inna Kanevsky of San Diego Mesa College, who is a TikTok creator with an audience of 1.1 million, frequently rebuts what she sees as irresponsible claims in videos posted by other creators. Some of the subjects of her criticism have said Kanevsky talks down to them, invalidates their experiences or misinterprets their intentions.

"It's funny because people will say, 'You're being passive-aggressive,' " Kanevsky said. "And I'm like, 'No, I'm being aggressive-aggressive.' If you posted nonsense, I'm going to tell you."

There's an important difference between providing therapeutic advice and making relatable content, creators maintain. But those lines can blur quickly.

In addition to making posts for her 129,000 Instagram followers, Siddiqi treats clients over video call. They often send her posts from other mental health creators to discuss during their sessions, and she helps them to assess the information and decide whether it applies.

The posts lead to good conversations and deeper insights, Siddiqi said. But she worries about where the algorithm sends people afterward and whether audiences get enough time to reflect. It's easy for people without real-life support to misinterpret mental health content or unfairly label themselves or others, she said.

The idea of people piecing together their mental health journeys on a monetized, algorithm-influenced app can feel scary, but critics need to pump the brakes, said Dusty Chipura, who makes TikTok videos about attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and mental health. She isn't too worried about self-diagnosis, because totally healthy people aren't generally the ones scrolling for information about symptoms and treatments, she said. Furthermore, health care professionals habitually discount people's concerns, she said, so, many people with real disorders never get formal diagnoses.

"You don't need a diagnosis of ADHD to benefit from the tips and tricks and strategies," Chipura said.

Audiences know to consider the context and to not accept as truth every word uttered by a creator, said Nedra Glover Tawwab, a licensed therapist and Instagram creator with 1.5 million followers. As with any marketplace, the onus is on consumers to decide whether they're buying what a particular creator is selling, she said.

In the world of online mental health guidance, there's little accountability for platforms or creators if something goes wrong.

Instagram in June launched a pilot called the Well-being Creator Collective, which it says provides funding and education to about 50 U.S. creators to help them produce "responsible" content on emotional well-being and self-image. The program is guided by a committee of outside experts, the company says.

Linda Charmaraman, senior research scientist and director of the Youth, Media & Well-being Research Lab at Wellesley Centers for Women, is on that committee and said that overall, participants seem to care deeply about using their platforms for good.

TikTok said it is "committed to fostering a supportive environment for people who choose to share their personal wellness journeys while also removing medical misinformation and other violations of our policies," according to a spokesperson.

"We encourage individuals to seek professional medical advice if they are in need of support," she said in a statement.

Ideally, social media apps should be one item in a collection of mental health resources, said Jodi Miller, a researcher at Johns Hopkins University School of Education who studies the relationships among young people, technology and stress.

"Young people need evidence-based sources of information outside the internet, from parents and schools," Miller said.

Often, those resources are unavailable. So it's up to creators to decide what mental health advice they put stock in, Fisher-Quann said. For her, condescending health care providers and the warped incentives of social media platforms haven't made that easy. But she thinks she can get better — and that her followers can, too.

"It all has to come from a place of self-awareness and desire to get better. Communities can be extremely helpful for that, but they can also be extremely harmful for that," she said.

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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	08/30 US: drone attack by Iran-backed militants
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/drone-attack-on-syria-base-came-from-iraqi-militants-u-s-officials-say-11661853601?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>The drones that attacked a U.S. military compound in southeast Syria on Aug. 15 were launched by Iranian-backed militants in central Iraq, U.S. officials say, posing a challenge for the White House as it seeks to navigate Baghdad's tumultuous politics.</p> <p>The Iraqi militia's alleged involvement was briefly made public last week when a U.S. military command in the Middle East tweeted a map showing that the attack had been launched from Iraq and providing photographs of remnants of the Iranian drones.</p> <p>But officials at the White House's National Security Council and the Pentagon expressed concerns about the disclosure. The Defense Department instructed that the tweet be deleted "due to operational</p>

sensitivities in the region,” Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Defense Department spokesman, told The Wall Street Journal.

U.S. officials say the information in the tweet was accurate and that the drones were launched from Iraq’s Babil province in an area controlled by Kataib Hezbollah, a militia with close ties to Tehran.

Throughout his administration, President Biden has chosen to [retaliate against drone attacks](#) by militias on Iraqi territory by striking targets in Syria or in far western Iraq near the Syrian-Iraqi border.

In line with that strategy, the Biden administration opted to retaliate against the drone attack from Iraq with [airstrikes on Aug. 24](#) against Iranian-backed militias in Syria. The approach appears intended to contain Iran’s regional ambitions, without intervening in Iraq’s turbulent politics.

“We open up a much bigger can of worms if we drop bombs on a target in Iraq,” said Michael Knights of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank on Middle East policy. “At this moment, it is something that could change the political game there. Opposing an American military role is something the Sadrists and Iran-backed elements could agree on. It is cost free to do it in Syria.”

A U.S. official said the target was chosen to send “a direct message” to Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, but declined to elaborate.

About 2,500 U.S. troops remain in Iraq, and U.S. officials are hopeful this force will be able to stay despite an [escalating crisis in Baghdad](#) that has pitted cleric Moqtada al-Sadr against a rival coalition of Iran-backed Shia parties over formation of the country’s next government.

Another 900 U.S. troops are in Syria, including soldiers from the Army’s 10th Mountain Division, who have been training a Syrian force at the al-Tanf garrison that has been combating Islamic State militants. Soldiers were present during the Aug. 15 drone attack but none was hurt, U.S. officials say.

On Aug. 24, U.S. F-15 and F-16 jet fighters bombed ammunition and logistics bunkers in Syria that American officials said were used by Iranian-backed militias. Further fighting ensued when militants fired rockets at American positions in eastern Syria and the U.S. responded with Apache attack helicopters, AC-130 gunships and M-777 howitzers.

Four militia fighters were reported to have been killed and 10 of their rocket launchers destroyed in that exchange. Two U.S. troops were wounded by shrapnel, while a third suffered a concussion, but all three have since returned to duty, U.S. military officials say.

On Aug. 24, the U.S.-led command overseeing the effort to help Iraqi and Syrian partners fight Islamic State militants tweeted a map showing that the Iranian-made drones flew from Iraq’s Babil province to the outpost in Syria.

Babil, 25 miles south of Baghdad, is the location of Jurf al-Sakhar, a formerly Sunni town that has remained a militia stronghold since it was taken back from Islamic State in 2014.

The U.S.-led command that put out the tweet is headed by Army Maj. Gen. John Brennan, who has the authority to release information pertaining to his mission. The map didn’t show a photo of the launch site, but rather presented an infographic that was approved by U.S. intelligence and security officials in the region, according to a person familiar with the process. The goal in posting the tweet was to try to deter future attacks by making it clear that the U.S. was aware of the Iraqi origin, the person added.

The command’s tweet, however, drew concerns inside the White House’s National Security Council and the Pentagon, which asked that it be removed due to “operational sensitivities in the region.”

The Pentagon didn’t say what those sensitivities are, but some officials have expressed concern that the tweet could complicate the U.S. military’s dealings with Iraqi authorities or further escalate tensions.

Another official said the tweet raised “operational security” concerns, but declined to be specific.

A spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad declined to say if the ambassador shared the NSC’s and Pentagon’s concerns.

The main Shiite militia that operates in the area where the drones were launched is Kataib Hezbollah. Kataib Hezbollah on Sunday denied it was involved in attacking al-Tanf.

“Kataib Hezbollah did not exchange bombing with the American invaders in the past week, whether in Iraq or Syria or elsewhere,” said Abu Ali Al-Askari, a senior spokesman for the militia group, in a statement on Twitter.

In March 2020, the Trump administration ordered airstrikes that struck the area and four other locations the Pentagon said were weapons-storage sites. The attacks were in response to a rocket attack against Camp Taji, north of Baghdad, which [killed two American troops](#) and a British soldier, and injured 14 others.

Nongovernmental experts said there may be other reasons why Washington officials want to keep a low profile about the U.S. role in Iraq, which has failed to form a government since a parliamentary election last year.

“The issue of the U.S. military training role in Iraq hasn’t been there since the election, and that’s the way the U.S. would like to keep it,” said Patrick Osgood, an Iraq analyst at Control Risks, a consultant firm. Other analysts say that the command was right to issue the tweet.

“There is no real cost to publicly exposing that we know that the Iranian regime is using its proxies and outposts in Iraq to attack U.S. troops,” said Joel Rayburn, who served as the U.S. special envoy for Syria during the Trump administration. “What hurts our credibility and weakens our deterrence is when the U.S. government bends itself into a pretzel to avoid saying what an entire region plainly sees.”

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HEADLINE	08/29 Swiss female ISIS jihadist not remorseful
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11157685/Female-ISIS-jihadist-stabbed-two-women-tells-trial-better.html
GIST	<p>A Swiss woman accused of trying to murder two women in the name of ISIS has said she would go back and do it better with the aid of accomplices if she could.</p> <p>The 29-year-old woman undergoing psychiatric treatment, who cannot be named for legal reasons, showed no remorse as she went on trial on Monday.</p> <p>She is accused of committing a 'terrorist act' on November 24, 2020 - a knife attack in the plush Manor department store in Lugano, in southern Switzerland's Italian-speaking Ticino region.</p> <p>'If I could go back, I would do it better... with accomplices,' the accused woman told Switzerland's Federal Criminal Court in Bellinzona, also in Ticino.</p> <p>It is alleged that she shouted 'Allahu akbar (God is greatest)' several times and 'I will avenge the Prophet Mohammed', and declared 'I am here for IS'.</p> <p>One of the two victims - who was attending the trial - suffered a serious neck injury, which was shown to the court in a photograph. The second sustained wounds on one hand and managed, with others, to control the assailant until the police arrived.</p> <p>Having discovered the Islamic State jihadist group on social media, she said she had planned for 'months, years' to 'do something' for IS and show that she was 'capable of carrying out a terrorist act'.</p>

'It didn't go as deeply as I thought,' the accused woman observed, before repeating: 'It has no effect on me.'

The accused dressed all in black wearing a long tunic, tights, a hoodie and a face mask

She was insistent on keeping her head covered, saying: 'I'm Muslim', before agreeing to lower the hood to comply with court rules.

The accused 'acted wilfully and with particular ruthlessness', according to the indictment issued by the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland.

The woman, whose father is Swiss and mother is Serbian, said she suffered epileptic seizures during her early childhood while her adolescence was marked by anorexia.

She did not go to secondary school but later did work experience as a sales assistant and a hairdresser.

The suspect has been in contact with psychologists and psychiatrists since her childhood. She said she is undergoing treatment while in custody that makes her 'nervous'.

The woman became pregnant at 17 by her future husband, a man of Afghan origin, whom she married aged 19 but the pair divorced last year after 'things went badly' over the birth of the child.

'It started well, then things went badly,' she said, explaining that her husband did not want her to study or have an abortion.

The baby was adopted by her parents because she was unwilling to take care of it herself.

Psychiatrist Carlo Calanchini told the court that the suspect suffers from 'slight mental retardation' and disorders similar to schizophrenia, with a particular lack of empathy.

He strongly doubted that she would that she will ever develop a 'better capacity for judgement' and estimated that she actually knew very little about jihadism - and much less than anyone who read the newspapers.

The suspect is primarily charged with attempted murder and violation of laws against association with Al-Qaeda, IS and related Islamist groups.

The woman, who was known to the police prior to the Manor attack, is also charged with repeated unlawful prostitution between 2017 and 2020.

After falling in love over social media in 2017 with a jihadist in Syria, she attempted to meet him, but was stopped by Turkish authorities at the Syrian border and sent back to Switzerland, it is alleged.

She was then admitted to a psychiatric clinic, police said.

The trial, being conducted in Italian, is set to last until Thursday, and the verdict is expected on September 19.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Australia: guilty plea; inciting terror abroad
SOURCE	https://www.rferl.org/a/tajikistan-australia-researcher-pleaded-guilty-inciting-terrorism/32009064.html
GIST	A Tajikistan-born former researcher at the University of Western Australia has been sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison after he pleaded guilty to inciting terrorism abroad.

	<p>Australian news agencies reported over the weekend that Abdusalom Odinzoda, officially known in Australia as Abdussalam Adina-Zada and considered by the authorities in Western Australia to be one of the state's most dangerous people, will be eligible for release on parole in August 2023.</p> <p>The 54-year-old biological chemist was arrested in December 2020 and charged with advocating the commission of a terrorist act overseas.</p> <p>Earlier this month, Odinzoda admitted at a court hearing to inciting extremist attacks in Tajikistan. Odinzoda was due to stand trial on three charges in 2023. However, prosecutors said earlier this month that they had dropped two of the charges after Odinzoda agreed to plead guilty to one count of inciting terrorism. The charge stems from his online activities between January and March 2019.</p> <p>Odinzoda, who worked at the University of Western Australia from 2009 to 2012 as a research associate, has been in custody since his arrest.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 ISIS-linked networks eye Syria camps
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/isis-linked-transnational-networks-formalize-priority-of-freeing-loyalists-from-syrian-prison-camps/
GIST	<p>While Western countries in particular still debate about the return of women and children detained under SDF authority in camps in N.E. Syria, with many Europeans making a push to take those who now disavow ISIS home, before Turks invade the area, geopolitical forces are hard at work pushing some detainees and their supporters to escape from rather simply to survive in camps and prisons in which they are currently held. On the one side, Turkey is sabre rattling from the north preparing for another Turkish-backed invasion of NE Syria with Turkey already engaging in missile attacks aimed at assassinating the Kurdish leadership of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) a group that fought ISIS with U.S. backing but who Turkey claims as part of the PKK terrorist group. Meanwhile, inside the camps, pro-ISIS women who have consistently had the most access to funds that arrive through informal hawala systems are busy recruiting youth taken into Syria who is now ageing into teens with small gifts and lavishing attention upon them which is then used to entice these teens to rebel against their anti-ISIS mothers, declare them apostate and ready themselves to escape to join ISIS. Young boys in the camps in the particular face growing pressure as they face the dire fate of once they reach puberty, based simply on their gender and age, being separated from their mothers in the camps and taken to SDF prisons for adolescent teens where they then can age into adult male prisons</p> <p>In recent months ICSVE has learned by monitoring pro-ISIS Telegram and social media accounts that there has been a direct and strong change in pro-ISIS support networks and crowdfunding campaigns to offer financial support to ISIS detainees held in Syria. Gone are the days, when the ISIS-linked fundraisers were only dedicated and interested in providing relief assistance for women and their children living in appalling conditions in the detention camps of northeastern Syria. Instead, their collective energies from distant geographies are now increasingly directed toward freeing individuals sympathetic to ISIS from camps and prisons in Syria, rather than helping them to survive inside the camps. A new alarming trend tied to these crowdfunding campaigns for ISIS detainees suggests that synergized international crowdfunding efforts are underway to free foreign ISIS minors from these camps in the wake of the increasing wave of repatriations and the SDF practice of removing young boys who reach adolescence from the camps to be placed in youth prisons where rehabilitation efforts are underway. With, the speedy repatriations of children from Al-Hol and Al Roj, undertaken by Belgium France and Russia Tajikistan to name only a few, and other countries preparing to do the same, there has been a heightened urgency on part of the ISIS-linked financial networks to work collectively, even from distant geographies, to make a list ditch effort for soliciting funds for smuggling the foreign ISIS minors out of the Al-Hol camp on a priority basis. Youth, in particular, are targeted for escapes, to take adolescent boys who are about to face prison who can instead replenish the ranks of ISIS fighters and the teen girls to come as brides for the fighters.</p> <p>Newly formed German Tajik and Russian pro-ISIS supporters ICSVE has been monitoring are, for instance, changing course from supporting pro-ISIS women in the camps and now instead joining hands</p>

in smuggling out their loyalist detainees. We see, for example, how one woman from the camps pleads for help of this type—escape—rather than support inside the camps, “Many families in our camps need freedom more than food and clothing! How many suffer from constant persecution and oppression by godless atheists who have no way out? How many wanted and wandered from one sector of the camp to another in an attempt to hide from the prowling military! How many wounded need diagnostics and high-quality treatment or surgery? How many mothers of big boys, every night afraid that they will come and take their sons to their schools so that later make them the enemies of their religion? You can rumble about the position of all the sisters and children for a long time, but the essence is the same – freedom is paramount”. These words sum up the entire picture of this study that focuses on our assessment of the changes witnessed in recent crowdfunding campaigns undertaken by pro-ISIS entities for buying the “freedom” of imprisoned and detained ISIS individuals in Syria with some interesting revelations about the social and digital matrix in which their financial operations thrive.

One case in particular discovered in July highlights these crowdfunding efforts undertaken by Russian, German and Tajik-speaking pro-ISIS networks for raising \$17,000 for smuggling out two Tajik ISIS minors from the Al-Hol camp on July 24— Tajikistan, [one of the countries actively favouring the return of its ISIS-linked nationals and that has also provided amnesty for its former ISIS fighters— repatriated, around 100 children and 42 women from the camps in northeastern Syria.](#) As many countries now make the tough but urgent decision, in the face of impending Turkish aggressions in the area, to bring home their ISIS families, the ISIS-related financial networks made it imperative to raise funds for getting children out of the camp seeing this counter move as the last golden opportunity from preventing the return of their youth to the “disbelieving lands” and as a very quick way to forge them into future extremists.

Consequently, on July 24, a staunch pro-ISIS Russian network named “And it is our duty to help the Believers” shared the emotive plea of Umm Hamza, a fugitive pro-ISIS Tajik woman from Al-Hol. In a long written text, Umm Hamza pleaded with ISIS supporters to raise funds of \$17,000 for freeing her two Tajik children out of the camp out of which she had already smuggled herself. Other interesting claims made were that the relatives of these children back in Tajikistan – aware of the Tajik woman’s stern decision of not allowing the repatriation of these minors—pushed an immediate demand for the return of the minors with Tajikistan’s government. For identifying these children in the camps– the post claims– relatives submitted the photos and other identity proofs to the official authorities in Tajikistan for ensuring their return. The pro-ISIS Tajik mother who escaped from Al-Hol purportedly asked the other Tajik women under whose guardianship her children are in the camps to conceal her children’s identities to delay the prospect of the reparation of her children.

In this context, it is also interesting to know that apart from their children, female ISIS loyalists have attempted to obstruct the repatriation of foreign orphan minors. This happened in the case of an Albanian preteen, Eva Dumani, who ICSVE was helping to repatriate. She was threatened and hidden from her country authorities in Camp al Hol by pro-ISIS women when Albanians came to take her home and she missed her opportunity as a result. Similarly, Aminah Mohamed, the orphaned American daughter of Ariel Bradley, was hidden from authorities in the camps by pro-ISIS women and even made to wear a niqab at age 8, and was only rescued after the SDF mounted a military operation in the camps to bring her home. The fact that Western countries who have been accelerating repatriations of late are also following the practice of asking ISIS mothers in the camps if they even want to be repatriated and leaving the decision up to them raises a very thorny question about the rights of their children who are not given their own choice as well as concerning the responsibilities of home countries to protect their minor children from maternal abuse. It could easily be argued that any pro-ISIS mother that chooses for her child to stay in the camps, perhaps in hopes of rejoining ISIS, rather than be repatriated, should be viewed by the home country as non-protective, neglecting the good of her child, and even abusive in making such a decision for the child. If the child were at home, the state would intervene in such circumstances and likely remove the child from her to act protectively on behalf of the minor despite the mother’s wishes to the contrary. In these cases, ICSVE has consistently argued that maternal rights need to be temporarily suspended by the home country and the children removed and repatriated despite their mother’s wishes to the contrary, especially in the case of her wish to stay behind and continue to root for the revival of ISIS. This was argued by ICSVE in the case of American Samantha el Hassani, that

her children should be taken back to the U.S. whether or not she wished to return herself, and that has already taken two of her children into ISIS she could legitimately be viewed as an abusive mother and have her parental rights temporarily suspended while the U.S. authorities worked on behalf of bringing her children home to the safety and freedom they deserved. The pro-ISIS women see it differently, however, viewing their children, and even those of the non-ISIS supporting women, as useful fodder for the fight. Orphan children have for instance been utilized by pro-ISIS women in the camps to garner more sympathy and solicit more donations from ISIS supporter communities. This observation is supported by the claims of many anti-ISIS Russian women who reiterated on social media that “they [pro-ISIS women] use orphans for funding and there were orphans whom we barely won back from one supporter of ISIS who was sent to Russia. Psychologists worked a lot with them so that they would come to their senses. These loyalists [ISIS supporters] frightened those around them that brothers [ISIS militants] would come and cut off their heads, etc. this is the upbringing of the ISIS loyalists they train them [the children] like animals.”

Umm Hamza, the mother of the Tajik minors left in al Hol for future smuggling out of the camp, rumbles how she and a handful of other Tajik women, a few days back, had successfully exited from Al-Hol to safely reach Atma, in the HTS held province of Idlib. And now she also wanted her children to be smuggled out as soon as possible so that they can accompany her to a “safe location”. It is widely known that Idlib has been the favourite destination for pro-ISIS female fugitives in Syria. Many foreign women who are smuggled out of the camp continue to anonymously lead their lives in Idlib province free to serve the militant jihadist cause while eluding justice, with some European women even chronicling their daily life on social media.

Umm Hamza’s call for help ends with the acknowledgement that the same Russian ISIS network named “It is our duty to help the Believers ” had already helped her raise \$7000 for her 17-year-old elder son. And now through a new crowdfunding campaign, she hopes to raise another 7000 dollars for her younger son so that they both can be smuggled out together from Al-Hol. Hence we see how the ISIS financial networks have moved from simply supporting pro-ISIS women and children inside the camps and beginning to now dedicate their efforts to mobilizing maximum financial assistance for older children in particular to be smuggled out to militant jihadists groups. In the case of these Tajik children, the fear among the pro-ISIS crowd is these children can be caught and immediately repatriated in the wake of recurrent sweeping raids and search operations conducted by the Kurdish security forces, the Asayish, to search them or, if they remain in the camps, they will be taken from their mothers to the adolescent prison and put in in rehabilitation programs that may turn them against ISIS ideology.

Apart from this, while this fundraiser for smuggling out the two Tajik minors was primarily spearheaded by the Russian group, “It is our duty to help the Believers” where the channel administrator posted regular updates about the progress of the money collection efforts, the plea was also aggressively circulated in 6 other Russian ISIS-linked crowdfunding Telegram channels with more than two thousand subscribers to diversify and expand the campaign’s outreach helping them collectively raise nearly \$2000 on the first day of the fundraiser. Encouraging other supporters to even contribute 10 rubles, the message shared by the administrator was “Brothers and sisters, Praise be to Allah, many, many, this is such a sign for us. “Only yesterday we opened the collection, and in one day we collected \$ 2190 الحمد لله رب العالمين. It is the mercy of Allah to us that the news reaches us about these camps and we can participate in them, and let no one think how 10 rubles will help there.” Likewise on August 1, the Russian ISIS-linked channel “And it is a duty to help the Believers” acknowledged that their aggressive crowdfunding campaigns yielded successful results as they expeditiously collected \$6,300 within a span of another 5 days.

Meanwhile another Russian ISIS-linked Telegram channel “Invitation to heaven” also aimed to collect another \$7000 for the two Tajik minors. This channel actively shared other messages and the progress reports of the monetary collection efforts from the “It is our duty to help the Believers” channel to bolster its funding campaign by successfully raising \$1000 in a single day. Some ISIS supporters doubted the legitimacy of these fundraisers as two parallel fundraisers were running for a similar cause – the freeing of Tajik teenagers from Al-Hol. Fearing that this confusion would demur others from contributing financially, the administrators of both these Russian ISIS-linked Telegram channels made

it clear that, though the money collections campaigns are different, they are dedicated to the same cause and it doesn't matter to whom the ISIS sympathizers decide to funnel their funds. This alluded to the fact that the Russian ISIS-linked networks had divided the responsibility of raising the funds considering the huge amount they needed to raise \$14,000. Meanwhile, other Russian channels that cross-shared this fundraiser appeal also encouraged their subscribers to give "Sadaqah", i.e. charity, for this crowdfunding campaign by regularly sharing the money collection updates of both the above-mentioned channels to help them quickly raise funds in the minimum duration of time.

Interestingly, to amplify the impact of this fundraiser and also garner more funds from central Asia, particularly Tajikistan, the Russian ISIS network "It is our Duty to Help Believers" and "Invitation to Heaven" channels appear to have collaborated with the Tajik financial network of the Islamic State of Khorasan province (ISKP) in Afghanistan known as "Devotion and Loyalty". This channel has reflected on its official ties to the ISKP by claiming that "this charity channel was officially opened by the brothers of Khorasan province for the captives of mujahideen brothers and sisters". This Tajik language ISIS financial network "Devotion and Loyalty" predominantly raise funds for ISIS families in Afghanistan as well as for Tajik families in Syrian detention camps and is linked to the "Protectors of the Ummat" group an informal ISKP recruiting group on Telegram, where the administrators of the group widely circulated the plea urging the supporters on the Telegram group for giving charity for freeing the two Tajik minors discussing the payments and threatening people with violence who failed to financially support them. Back in May 2022 the Tajik ISKP network "Devotion and Loyalty" administrators in collaboration with a Russian ISIS network "Invitation to Heaven" were instrumental in collectively raising handsome donations of around \$4000 in 10 days earmarked for building a religious school for the children of ISKP fighters, \$2500 as Zakat for the ISKP militants in Afghanistan, and \$200 for Aqiqah- the Islamic practice of sacrificing an animal on the occasion of a child's birth. This collaboration demonstrated that the money collected through the coordinated Russian Tajik crowdfunded campaigns reached ISKP fighters to bankroll its activities and operations in Afghanistan.

The crowdfunding money collected through the anonymous and highly secure payment system of QIWI wallets can be funneled in Afghanistan through unregistered informal hawala networks and cash couriers that have been the most favoured method for sending funds for ISKP in Afghanistan. Due to the limited reach of commercial banks in Afghanistan, these informal money transfer systems, hawala, [serve as the everyday mechanism for sending money around Afghanistan and abroad](#) just as they also do in Syria. As ISIS detainees explained to ICSVE, any money that reaches Turkey is essentially already accessible in Syria via hawala networks. The January 2022 UN ISIL (Daesh) and Al-Qaida Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team also substantiate these findings highlighting how an international financial facilitator for ISKP in Afghanistan Ismatullah [Khalozai through his Turkey-based hawala business](#) transferred \$ 87,000 to finance ISIS-K operations. In July 2022 UN ISIL (Daesh) and Al-Qaida Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team [report also further elucidating this dynamic as ISKP –through ISIS's Al Karrar revenue office in Somalia](#)— received money through cash couriers via Yemen to arrive in Afghanistan. As the ISKP official Al-Azaim media and its decentralized media propaganda ecosystem are heavily focused on producing, and disseminating their propaganda content in central [Asian languages aimed at attracting and recruiting ethnic Tajik and Uzbek speaking fighters](#) from Afghanistan and Central Asia into their ranks-particularly calling upon the [Tajiks to fulfil the Islamic obligation of emigrating and waging jihad against enemies](#) in Afghanistan— there also lies a possibility that these foreign fighters from neighbouring countries bordering Afghanistan, eager to join ISKP could also serve as conduits for bringing cash flows upon their arrival in Afghanistan for the ISKP with the possibility that these funds could be also diverted to Syria for the escapes of ISIS women and teens. It's not only just the money that has been laundered, there has also been sound evidence of various human smugglers enterprises involved in facilitating the movement of ISIS fighters in various conflict theatres with the latest case of an ISKP militant, Mohammed Ayoub aka Hanzalehn apprehended in Afghanistan by [Taliban's General directorate of intelligence for fundraising for ISKP in Afghanistan](#), supplying weapons and enabling the migration of ISKP fighters from Afghanistan to Turkey via Iran. This study points to how the increasing focus of ISIS-linked financial facilitators for crowdfunding money for freeing out minors, women and even male ISIS fighters will fuel the proliferation of human smuggling enterprises in Syria and elsewhere continuing the human smuggling business as a lucrative practice in the future.

Already trading off their expanded outreach for their digital security, with a greater social media visibility – acting like an Achilles heel – for these ISIS-linked financial networks– it was observed that the payments for these crowdfunding campaigns were strictly only accepted through the Russian electronic wallet payment system of QIWI. The digital payment Russian gateway offers users a wide range of payment methods with the possibility of funds being deposited conveniently to the recipient’s electronic wallet via thousands of QIWI Terminals— widespread in Russia and the other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) phone stores, ATMs or via Digital QIWI wallets accessed on smartphones with the QIWI cash appearing on the recipient account instantly. Apart from this, it is also the most preferred payment system for illicit entities as these digital QIWI Wallets can be easily replenished from the QIWI app, website or through widespread QIWI terminals with cash in rubles and other local currencies coupled with instant withdrawal from Visa QIWI Wallet to owner’s bank accounts and cards or other money transfer systems. To combat the menace of money laundering that fueled illicit funding to the terror outfits like ISIS-abetted by their widespread use of such highly secured- online E-wallets, [the Russian government in August 2020 imposed a ban on all anonymous cash deposits on electronic wallets, making it obligatory to make top-ups with bank transfers](#). This legislation required them to identify themselves by linking their bank accounts to their electronic wallets enabling the authorities to trace the source origin of funds. But as is evident, these legislations to curb the tentacles of terror financing have not deterred independent Russian financial networks from raising funds for ISIS individuals. The contact numbers linked to QIWI wallets that were used for raising money were registered with Megaphone, Skartel Lota, and Mobile TeleSystems (MTS) operating from Moscow, Leningrad, and the Republic of Dagestan respectively, suggesting that all of the financial operations could have been potentially run from Russia. This was done to trace the origin of funds as QIWI is providing its services in Russia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Belarus, Romania, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan amongst others. The tracked QIWI Wallet numbers suggested that the owners of the account were using these networks for a considerable duration of time suggesting that these numbers could be the working contacts of the administrators of these ISIS-linked crowdfunding networks.

While raising funds for smuggling out ISIS minors, ISKP Tajik Telegram channel “Devotion and Loyalty” recirculated a video tutorial offering a step-by-step guide – exclusively for its Russian target base -about transferring money effortlessly from Russia’s largest Sberbank to the digital QIWI Wallets. But ultimately the large stream of illicit and suspicious donations creeping into the Tajik channel’s provided digital QIWI Wallet number led to immediate suspension of their accounts and the resultant loss of all donations’ alarming other interconnected Russian-linked financial networks to morph themselves with new names for their networks and redirecting donations to new accounts to keep the money flowing. Out of the 4 Russian networks involved, every channel receiving donation requests provided at least 2 different QIWI account wallets as a strategy of diversifying and obscuring the increasing flow of anonymous donations required for raising \$17,000. The Russian and the Tajik organizers in a bid to implore more Muslims to do their bit insisted that if they cannot fulfil the important Islamic obligation of freeing the Muslim captives, they could give the money in the form of debt, thus, pushing the dubious claims of the Tajik mother who promised to “return the debt as soon as her sons are out of the prison.”. This narrative of “giving “Sadaqah” (charity) in the form of debt is employed to coax the supporters to translate their empty words of assurance, and feelings of pity and empathy for these women into immediate action by rapidly providing them with urgent financial assistance, hopefully, without expecting anything in return.

The Russian and Tajik ISIS-linked channels were more transparent in giving details about the individuals that needed to be smuggled out when juxtaposed with ISIS-linked German channels that withheld information on the nationality of the Tajik minors citing “security concerns”, ostensibly knowing that they would get a pale response from the target audience- Muslims in Europe. This phenomenon has been discussed in detail in [“the trends of crowd campaigns for ISIS women ” study that accentuates how factors like ethnicity, nationality, language, affiliation, and ideological orientations](#) have been highly influential in driving ISIS supporters’ decisions of providing financial help for the women in the camps. On July 24, two German ISIS-linked channels “Sisters in Tent” and “Spend in the way of Allah” unitedly posted a long distressing “SOS” text that called upon the

supporters for aiding the escape of 2 “lions of Ummah” (i.e. the Tajik minors) for which they claimed \$7000 needed to be urgently raised. The information shared on the German channels was similar to that of the appeals posted on the Russian and Tajik ISIS-linked channels – but falsely implied that the funds were raised for the escape of children of German ISIS women. Contrary to Russian and Tajik channels that treaded with utmost caution in terms of accepting payments from other modes of transfers, solely depending on their lifeline- QIWI, the German channels promoting the fundraiser offered a brazen buffet of diverse payment options for their subscribers that included RIA Transfer, Bitcoin, Money Gram, Western Union, direct bank transfers and other cryptocurrencies like Tether (USDT), a stablecoin, known to be less volatile than other cryptocurrencies, as it is tied to real-world assets and the US dollar for maintaining its stable value.

Without paying heed to enviable repercussions for financing terrorism, one of the German ISIS financial networks ” Spend in the way of Allah”, while giving the recipient bank details to their followers, ostensibly exposed the trail of illicit money departing from Germany to Syria. For facilitating international donations of around \$500 the money was to be transferred to the beneficiary ‘Kujtim Bunjaku’s savings account opened with C24 gmbh bank in Frankfurt am Main. C24 bank was opened in 2020 as an initiative of the Munich-based Check 24, the largest comparison portal in Germany providing price comparisons for various financial products in the areas of insurance telecommunication, travel etc. This is just one of the thousands of examples demonstrating how Germany’s financial ecosystem has provided breathing space for ISIS financial intermediaries to exploit the loopholes of the country’s banking system to openly move funds with ease from Germany to Syria without fearing the repercussions of terrorism financing. The support provided by the German ISIS networks is not limited to the women in Syrian detention camps but also to those who are convicted and arrested in Germany for their membership with ISIS. Another German network channel on Telegram “Free our Sisters” in unison with ” Rayat Al-Tawhid” and ” Al Asra” ISIS networks helped raised back in February 2022 legal fees of around \$11,000 in instalments for bailing out a Russian ISIS member from Dagestan province detained in Berlin, awaiting his repatriation to Russia. The donations were accepted through the crowdfunding site ” PayPal Generosity Networks” with funds being transferred directly to the beneficiary Hakan Dündar’s PayPal account. The account still [has not been reported or taken down by PayPal for sponsoring terror financing](#).

Usually accepting funds by giving bank transfer details of individuals is a risky gamble as it has a greater potential of blowing the lid off their identities revealing sensitive information about the ISIS financial facilitators and making it easier for intelligence and law enforcement to track them down. In such cases, laundering money for financing ISIS detainees through Islamic charitable organizations provides them with the cover of anonymity and also eases the process of laundering money to the internment camps in Syria. For example, in [ICSVE’s previous research reports, it](#) was exposed how the funds for building a mosque were covertly diverted for the cause of ISIS detainees in Syria. But here it is discernible how the efforts for soliciting donations for ISIS detainees are no longer subtle or operating behind closed doors, and rather perceptible in the form of appeals for donations being posted on open channels on Telegram offering myriad payment options for fund transfers that have the potential of exposing the ISIS financier’s identity.

Many of the monitored German fundraising campaigns for smuggling out ISIS minors were comfortable with accepting payments through bank transfers, showing their hubris of slyly evading the scrutiny of their country’s financial system and law enforcement bodies for their involvement in financing terrorist activities. Even in 2020, it was revealed Germany’s [biggest financial institution Deutsche Bank, despite red flags, was indirectly involved in laundering money to terrorist groups](#) as it authorized and processed millions of dollars of suspicious transactions for its FBME client– an offshore bank in Cyprus –that was funnelling money to financiers of the Syrian regime and businessmen trading oil with ISIS and other organized criminal networks. Other German ISIS-linked networks- ‘Sisters in the Tent” and “Spend in the way of Allah” were also raising funds for the Tajik minors by first getting in touch with their well connected unregistered hawala networks in Turkey, instructing the benefactors (ISIS sympathizers) from Europe to transfer funds through Western Union to the bank account of ISIS financial facilitators that are involved in dealing with the many unlawful money transfer entities in Istanbul. In this case, the supporters were asked to transfer money to a hawala operator named ” Heysen Hemet ” in Istanbul with

the stated purpose of funds transfer to be labelled with certain codewords like “Amazon” or “Family help” to evade the bank’s anti-money laundering compliance mechanisms. Thus, the money that was transferred through Western Union was directly funnelled to the unregulated money transfer offices in Turkey via these financial networks based in Germany.

It is widely known and was often shared with ICSVE by ISIS detainees, that Turkey has been acting as the key financial and logistics hub for ISIS’s activities fueling its resurgence [in Syria with the recently busted Turkish money service business of Alaa Khanfurah, who served as a key intermediary in sending thousands of dollars to ISIS members in Syria](#). A recent July investigation by Nordic Monitor further highlighted [the ISIS financier in Turkey from Konya province facing arrest warrants since 2013 and many terror financing charges](#)—owing to the bureaucratic neglect and judicial oversight—continued to have unfettered access to the country’s banking system to use financial services (credit cards and debit cards) for these purposes with impunity. Treading with the utmost caution, in the wake of tightened border security measures and scrutiny over bank transactions, ISIS has refrained from dealing with traditional hawala dealers and instead uses its networks via front companies and money transfer offices registered in Turkey which have enabled swift transfers to the ISIS families in Iraq and Syria. To no surprise, lately, a pattern of daunting evidence has emerged to expose how nefarious entities and individuals continue to tap the Turkish financial system to seamlessly move, store and obscure funds for ISIS, eventually landing Turkey in the global terror financing watchdog, FATF’s 2021 grey list underling its strategic deficiencies in combating money laundering and terror financing.

Finally, on August 5, the collaborative efforts of the Russian German and Tajik channels paid off as the Russian ISIS-linked channel “It is our duty to help the Believers” announced that within 10 days, they were able to collectively achieve their target of raising \$17,000 solely through these crowdfunding campaigns. The channel admin writes “Brothers and sisters, with the permission of Allah, we collected \$ 17,000 for two brothers R ... and Sh Praise be to Allah, many and many boys came out and in a safe place Alhamdulillah Alhamdulillah. We ask Allah to make it easier for other boys to leave and settle them in a safe place where it will be good for them, for Allah is the Best of the Dispensers. Amin”. This posting highlights the difficulty of delegitimizing militant jihadist efforts because until such youth are repatriated it can be argued by ISIS supporters that the boys may be living better in Idlib, reunited with their mother than forced away from her and locked in an SDF prison.

Till now, the encounters with these crowdfunding efforts hinted at the slowly shifting interest of the ISIS-linked financial networks towards raising smuggling capital for freeing the minors and women from the camps, but now this trend has been formalized by an alarming development as the 3 most active Russian ISIS-linked networks “It is our Duty to Help Believers”, “Invitation to Heaven” and “Nusbaya Bhaguz” in a long message openly declared that their financial endeavours will from now onwards be solely dedicated for freeing the women and minors and incarcerated ISIS fighters from the prisons in northeastern Syria. This means that they will no longer be catering their energies towards collecting funds for helping women afford the necessities of daily life including food, clothing, toys, etc. as they now claim this is not what they need. The new narrative peddled is that the end solution of any financial help should be tangible and that it is only by smuggling out these ISIS families from the camp that they can again win over their “freedom”. The admin writes “ We consider that the freedom of Muslims is more important and dearer, their release is obligatory according to our prescription, and the reward of this work is great and given by Allah. Truly, many families in our camps need freedom more than food and clothing! How many wounded need diagnostics and high-quality treatment or surgery? How many mothers of big boys, every night afraid that they will come and take their sons to their schools so that later they will make their warriors out of them! You can list the position of all the sisters and children for a long time, but the essence is the same – freedom is paramount. We see with our own eyes that no people are dying of hunger here”. Indeed, there is Islamic legitimacy in this shift as a key tenet of Islam is freedom and there is really little provision in Islamic teachings for imprisoning criminals even. Islam teaches that criminals are to be swiftly punished and reintegrated into society, but prison and loss of freedom are anathemas in Islam. Thus the channel correctly reiterates that the threat posed to those, who are proactively involved in money collection campaigns from the Syrian camp remain vulnerable targets with “the sword of deportation, prison sentences and separation from children dangling over their heads.”

However, there is a catch when it comes to the new fundraising goals. Not all the women who apply to these fundraisers for help will be “qualified” for receiving financial smuggling aid from these networks. The fundraisers state that only women and families who “are true to their beliefs” will be considered for getting their assurance of help in coming out of the camps. This is the same as previous support financing that required that women receiving help inside the camps be willing to marry their ISIS supporters over the Internet or otherwise profess full support for ISIS’s ideology. In their own words, “These fees will only go to those with the right beliefs. Innovators [those who attempt to change Islam], fitnah [seditionists] and all kinds of dubious people will not receive funds from the collection in any case! Therefore, an iron tazkiya [spiritual purification] is needed for every family! At the slightest deviation from the aqidah, the Sunna in the direction of heresy and the fees will be immediately directed to another family.” With some families chosen after they fulfil this ideological criterion, each of them will be closely vetted by these administrators to assess whether their talk of ideological adherence is reflected in their actions, thus, prioritizing which families “deserve” to be first smuggled out from the camps. Here even those—who pretend online to defend ISIS against the accusations of the organization being “takfiri” entering into conflicts virtually and physically with those who have publicly denounced ISIS for securing excess financial rewards from supporters will be tested if they ever approach these networks for sponsoring their release from Al-Hol. To put it simply, only those families will be financially promised to be smuggled out who post their release serve as an asset in any capacity to the organization whether in the operational, ideological or financial realm.

A prominent pro-ISIS Russian woman, one of the admins of “Nusbaya Baguz” channel believed to be running the financial operations from Al-Hol obliquely spells out how they know whom to help as they are closely monitoring the actions of all women for 3 years to give them a clear picture of who are living up to their claims of being true monotheists by practising a truly pure Islamic life emulating the Salafs [companions of the Prophet] and walking on the path of prophetic “Aqeedah and Manhaj” [creed and methodology]. When asked by some supporters on the group what distinguishes hypocrites from “true “believers” to be qualified further for receiving smuggling aid, the woman in charge of the “Nusaya Al Bhaguz” network stated “being here all these 3 years already, as they say, we know every woman what she adheres to and what she strives for. A lot happened here. Constant different fitna [sedition] due to which the true beliefs and goals of different personalities were revealed. The masks fell off their faces and everything fell into place. Secondly, there is and remains a category of hypocrites, as you have noticed in your deeds. We see their deeds and do not trust them, although they reckon themselves to us. We keep such people at a distance, not trusting them with our affairs. People who betrayed or deceived Muslims cannot be from our number [from the true believers of ISIS].” This indicates what ICSVE has been noting for years now, that there are ISIS enforcers in the camp, that they have been closely observing, attempting to control and threatening the residents of the camp. These enforcers now clearly divide the women into different categories: supporters, renegades (those who are against the group) and apostates (who cooperate with the camp authorities). It appears that the contingent of the Russian female loyalists in Al-Hol might be tasked with the responsibility by the ISIS elements of choosing the right families who follow “monotheism”, that is upholding ISIS’s extremist ideology for getting access to the financial capital offered by these networks.

Other considerations for shortlisting potential families for helping them raise smuggling capital include those who are the “most needy” with having “no means to get out of captivity”, followed by individuals having underlying medical conditions and those who are on the radar of the camp authorities all prioritized in the first place. The other condition was the guaranteed support for the families, who refrained from getting into conflicts with other women over the limited available funds in a bid to secure an extra share of the economic pie for leading a better lifestyle in the camps. Women already competing over acquiring scarce financial resources is a serious concern in the camps leading to the ruffling of feathers between the camp residents as they often enter into mundane conflicts of day-to-day bickering, and altercations that might sometimes erupt into violent clashes for accessing limited resources. The last condition for securing “ransom aid” is the promise of keeping these fundraisers inconspicuous in the larger social circles of the camps coupled with the warnings of not circulating or publicizing these funding appeals with other apostate channels to avoid their Telegram channels from being flagged and taken down, counter-terrorism efforts that could circumscribe their reach and ability

to solicit donations. They also make clear that all the money they have raised till now for the provision of relief aid will be fully allocated for raising ” “smuggling” fees of the new families.

Apart from securing \$17,000 for Tajik minors, Russian-linked channels also posted an appeal for securing \$11,000 for brokering the release of an ISIS financier who they claim was arrested again after serving his sentence in Syria for enabling mass escapes of many women from the camp for which they claim he even sold his phone. In one of Telegram’s internal chats, one administrator of the Russian-linked financial network who seems to know the prisoner personally— shared the man’s foreign identity number issued by the Republic of Turkey purportedly disclosing his identity as the 40-year-old Turkish resident of Russian origin Marat Diiarov. The donation drive started in the second week of July, and went till the third week of July according to the admins of the page, “Sadaka in the Way of Allah” which declared having raised \$20,000 for facilitating the exit of the alleged ISIS member from the Syrian prison. It appears that it is mainly the Russian networks at the forefront of conducting #free the prisoner campaigns that lead to the release of women and children and male ISIS members. The Russian organizers of “Nusaiba Bhaguz” which has many administrators with one admin being a Russian woman loyal to ISIS from inside the camp, posted on August 5 that they have already started working in this direction of restricting its fundraising exclusively to “ransom collection” (smuggling fees) with one of the glossy advertisements posted on their pages mentioning the details of the QIWI Wallet, encouraging the channel subscribers to donate for this cause personally sharing further details in the Telegram bot about the family they help plan to escapee.

These channels back in early 2022 also widely circulated a decree issued allegedly by an ISIS Qadi [judge] in Syria that strictly prohibited revealing the faces of women and children in their photo reports where they are seen holding placards on which the name of the fundraiser and the amount is written as evidence for the channel followers to show that their donations are reaching the camps. Photographing women and children was proscribed by the Sharia judge as, according to him, it showed the women of the ummah in a humiliating position devoid of their chastity in the absence of their fully black veiled burqas. The statement read “As for photographing the sisters and their children, we do not allow this, in any way it would not be, since in these photographs there is humiliation and shame for our chaste and purest sisters. We will not accept the photographing of one of our sisters, or the photographing of the children of our brothers, even if they offer all the wealth of the earth in return.” The message ended with a” Listen and Obey” repost appeal in other channels with the message of asking other Russian administrators of the ISIS-linked channels “to observe the obligation in their channels and also prohibiting others from circulating images with women and children”. Since then, this decree has been strictly followed by many Russian networks who only share the evidence of the money collection reports with the faces of women blurred or stroked out and on cardboard mentioning the name of the fundraiser against the backdrop of their tent. Upholding the edicts of the ISIS sharia judge demonstrates at least indirect, if not direct, communication is established between these networks and official ISIS members in Syria with their unswerving loyalty to the group. Hence it’s not surprising to see that these channels have laid out specific criteria for only helping those women flee the camps who they see adhering to ISIS’s ideology manifesting in their speech and actions.

While factors like final destination of the location, mode of transport, transit routes, arrangement of accommodation facilities, and bribes for the intermediaries drive the smuggling costs up, many women also suggest escaping now is a risky gamble to counter the menace of ISIS threat, SDF has launched an aggressive security crackdown that has led to an increase in counter-ISIS raids, search operations, and rigorous monitoring and surveillance measures to track the movement of camp inhabitants. Further, they also shed a light on the growing trust deficit with smugglers as the smugglers renege on their promises of helping the women get out of the camps at the last moment, and for greater bribes end up sharing intelligence about the escapes with the SDF, thus exposing them to getting apprehended by the camp authorities. “Can you imagine 19 thousand dollars from one family, children over 12 years old are also paid as adults, this is a lot of money for the Kurds, why don’t you think they would not want to have it”.

The increasing smuggling rates are not a cause of concern for those female ISIS loyalists who know that the group will pull out all stops for releasing them and their children out of the camps. Till the time they

are in the camps, they also would deal with fewer problems in handling their finances as the group takes care of it all. As per accounts of those who have openly denounced ISIS's extremist ideology, they have also paid heavy repercussions for it. They see the smuggling of minors as "usual business" for those who are still affiliated and working for the group inside Al-Hol. One woman on her social media profile recalls how she was brutally beaten when she publicly called out ISIS caliphs for letting the women suffer in these conditions alone (in the camp). The concerns about female ISIS loyalists ruling the camp with an iron rod are rooted in reality as ICSVE has repeatedly reported. This woman writes, "It was a year ago that I openly made a call against the daily. They almost killed me. I had more than 38 stitches on my head. They pierced my lung with a knife. I barely made it to Al Hasakah hospital. They accuse everyone they beat of spying. But the whole camp knows me and everyone knows why they beat me. I am afraid that as reprisal they can even harm children." ICSVE has many reports where children were indeed harmed by the ISIS enforcers as well as their children used to throw rocks or hurl insults at those who have denounced ISIS.

Those disillusioned with ISIS, who claim to sever their ties with the group in internal group chats on Telegram speak of danger to their own lives as they virtually and in person have been vocal about ISIS's deviance and its tendency of declaring excess takfir, i.e. declare as apostates, against those who don't toe to their worldview. Indeed, women in the camps who regularly text on illicit phones to the second author state that the pro-ISIS women have drawn up kill lists for when ISIS retakes the camps to punish all those who failed to support the group. Shedding a light on this dynamic, another Russian woman, posted "There are those who support ISIS and are even ready to go to the desert with them, ready to experience hunger, bombing, ready to continue to lose their children. In a word. There are also those who, for the sake of money or out of fear, pretend to support ISIS and people like me who are against ISIS and do not hide it. Of course, we are not given the money that they [ISIS acolytes] are sent here from everywhere. We have to keep our children at home because the children of fanatics can beat our children because at home they are told that we are apostates. Nevertheless, we hold on to our opinions, we constitute around 20% of the entire camp, or maybe less." She continued describing al Hol camp, "Most of our people live in the first district, there is little third-party ISIS, if there are such, then they are not so ardent. But in other areas, there are terrible children. I follow my daughter when she is on the street and ask her to stay home. I won't let her be with those children. These children even hurt animals by bullying them. One of the children beat upon the belly of the dog in front of me and I was like "Is this coming and also fear what they will now learn from their fanatical mothers?" On the problems faced by the hisbah, ISIS's religious police brigade, to continue to insist upon governing the daily life of women in the camps, another Russian woman laments "There were many cases where they were just ready to wield hammers and use knives. One was beaten because they suspected that she knew the Kurds, but this is not true. I know she is my close friend. The other because her brother works in the Red Cross organization, another because she got a lot of debts, and someone because she didn't wear a black niqab. Someone for watching movies, someone who says something talks with sellers in the souq [market], someone for keeping a dog. they just find someone to beat". Indeed, the female guards in these camps have also told ICSVE of being attacked and beaten by pro-ISIS women. The latest demonstration of how the kids are diligently indoctrinated by the pro-ISIS mothers was seen during the recent Eid Al Adha celebrations in the camp when the mothers jubilantly [filmed their kids as they took part in the Eid Al Adha celebrations. In another case, a recent video surfaced when during the social gathering celebrating Eid girls as young as age 5 donned in black veils](#) were seen listening to the "Dawah lessons" provided by a group of women in tents with the ISIS flag in the background.

The ISIS attack on al-Sinaa prison in northeastern Syria that freed around 300 of its comrades reflects ISIS's continued operational capacity and resilience to pose a potential future threat to the security of the region. [Alarmed by the attack, the SDF doubled down on its security measures in the Al-Hol camp through intense patrolling, search raids to hunt down ISIS-affiliated cells, and revamped security infrastructure to monitor the movements of the camp residents.](#) Yet, the effects of such tightened security measures continue to face serious challenges and results on the ground. Al-Hol continues to be a flashpoint of ISIS violence with alleged ISIS sleeper daily targeting those who work with the SDF by providing the Kurds with intelligence about the ISIS-linked sympathizers in the camp. [Their chosen methods of killing include assassinations using silenced guns, stoning to death, beheadings, and executions with the death toll of killings having reached 100 since Jan 2021.](#) Compounding the threat

posed by the IS-linked sleeper cells in the camp is another security predicament. The problem of regular escape attempts of the female ISIS members that the security apparatus is still clearly scrambling to deal with. [On 3rd August the Asayish claimed to have foiled an escape attempt of 56 ISIS members including 39 children](#) by intercepting trucks carrying escapes, followed by sweeping investigations, in which a network of dug tunnels [and trenches connecting to the outer walls of the camps were discovered for allegedly smuggling goods and the residents from Al-Hol.](#)

As accentuated, the detention centres and prisons holding ISIS affiliates in northeastern Syria guarded by understaffed SDF and Asayish security personnel whose salaries are nothing in comparison to the ISIS bribes they can be offered, house ISIS cells which serve as [a source of persistent security problems. This dynamic can be further deteriorated as the SDF, surrounded by hostile forces, now scrambles to deal with the renewed threat of the Turkish military incursion into the towns of Manbij and Tal Rifat under its control in Aleppo governorate,](#) with the possibility of drawing away security personnel from [clamping down on ISIS cells and guarding ISIS prisoners to fighting against Turkish forces, harbouring an environment conducive for ISIS's increased attacks in Syria or conducting prison breakouts.](#) In the last Turkish incursion, an ISIS prisoner prison in Derrick suffered escapes as did the camp of Ain Issa. Further, the volatile security situation might force the international aid organizations to suspend their operations exacerbating the already humanitarian challenges faced by residents of the camp at a time when the security situation in the camp is already tenuous. This – in retrospect- is quite similar to the 2019 Turkish invasion of northeastern Syria that led to the escape of 850 detainees from Ain Issa camp as the bombs struck the camp's vicinity. As expected, the proliferation of such crowdfunding campaigns for freeing ISIS detainees and on-the-ground fragile security environment that led to newly increasing security breaches and mass escapes from Al-Hol could easily bolster ISIS insurgency as the pro-ISIS women fugitives post their exit from the camps and could regroup forming a nucleus for ISIS cells outside the camp.

Also, there is no doubt, that a sophisticated ISIS assault on Al Ghwerian prison in January 2022 that enabled the escape of dozens of leaders to the Central Syrian desert has emboldened ISIS to carry out such large-scale prison breakouts at a time when it has maintained the momentum of waging a resilient insurgency through central and northeastern Syria. Adversaries involved in the conflict (the US-backed Kurdish-led SDF, Turkish-backed Syrian National Army(SNA) the Syrian regime allied forces backed by Russia and Iran) often acting at [cross purposes, are unable to co-ordinate their counter-terrorism operations against ISIS, facilitating the free movement of ISIS militants across permeable lines of control between Al Badia and SDF held northeastern Syria, allowing the insurgency to regroup and revamp its fighting capacity.](#) It's unclear if ISIS still receives complicit support from Turkey but the SDF claims that former ISIS members are serving in the SNA and that many nefarious actors support them financially. Moreover, the group relies on decentralized autonomous cells spread across central and northeast Syrian provinces with the local ISIS commanders imbued with relative authority over operational matters, ensuring the longevity of its survival further making it a tall task for SDF for hunting the ISIS militants down. Likewise, Turkish assassinations via missiles leave the SDF grappling with senior leadership losses.

Lately, in the wake of the failure of Damascus' and its allies' counter-terrorism operations to weed out [ISIS from Al Badia, the group has benefited even more from the harsh topographical conditions of vast, sparsely populated desolated desert stretches of Al- Badia desert](#) that serves as a major logistical base for storing weapons, setting up training camps apart from facilitating their movements to and from various conflict theatres. Lately, ISIS fighters infiltrating from Al Badia into the neighbouring SDF-held province of Deir Ez-Zor and its countryside to keep up the drumbeat of their small-scale [operations by significantly conducting targeted assassinations against the local SDF commanders, technocrats and religious tribal heads working with SDF and civilians alike, further denying SDF's credibility of serving as the net security provider in northeastern Syria.](#) Apart from targeted assassinations, ISIS-linked theft, extortions, and roadside shootings have been on the rise, with ISIS, lately not only concentrating its operations in certain parts of Deir Ez-Zor but also, bolstering its presence in the areas farther in the north in Al- Hasakah province and towards the west in the Raqqa countryside and the town of Manbij, while also aggressively recruiting the locals from Deir-Ezzor province grappling with poverty into its ranks promising them with the salary of \$150 to 200 dollars guaranteeing their livelihood. Interestingly

apart from these crowdfunding campaigns that are directed towards the cause of freeing ISIS detainees, capitalizing on its terror and gory violence tactics, [ISIS has financially supported its operations, by running pay-for-protection rackets.](#) Through these rackets, ISIS has been forcing the business owners in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor governorates to pay protection money of up to 2000 dollars by issuing explicit virtual threats and using intimidating tactics of delivering written threats stamped with the ISIS logo at the target's doorstep, asking them to deliver money quickly and discreetly to avoid reprisals from the group. This same tactic was used in years past by ISIS in Iraqi territory, particularly around Mosul, where the group held. With the fear of retaliation from ISIS coupled with these extortion schemes going undetected by the [SDF owing to them being surreptitiously run by ISIS, the group will likely continue to thrive financially by frequently resorting to running the lucrative business of extortion rackets.](#) Further, the fragile security threat from ISIS is reinforced as the SDF struggles to win over and co-opt the Arab tribes from Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor provinces as their underlying claimed grievances towards the ANNES — [economic disparity and hardships in the predominantly Arab areas, claims of the use of SDF's heavy-handed security measures towards civilians and arbitrary arrests in counter-ISIS raids, lack of the inclusion in the decision-making process — remain to be fully resolved.](#) These grievances create an opening for ISIS for luring more men from the Arab tribes into their fold and are also exploited by the bigger enemies of the SDF who also pour funds into these efforts to splinter support from the SDF. Apart from the trust deficit between some of the Arab tribes and Kurdish-led AANES having a detrimental impact on the SDF's long-term counter-terrorism ISIS efforts, many locals have shown apprehension further refraining from co-operating with the SDF on providing intelligence regarding ISIS cells as it would dearly cost them their lives as documented by the [increase in the spate of killings of informants and other locals collaborating with the SDF committed by ISIS sleeper cells.](#) To make it worse, these contemporary on-the-ground debilitating security developments are accompanied by worrying concerns in the contours of IS-linked terrorism financing as the transnational Russian ISIS networks formally declared their intent and resolve of dedicating their crowding efforts solely to smuggling out ISIS loyalists from the Syrian detention facilities. For them, this means bidding adieu to their long-time promises of providing relief aid for many women in the Syrian prison camps deprived of financial support from friends and families, irrespective of their affiliation— indicating that all the fund's worth thousands of dollars originally raised for providing daily assistance will be entirely diverted for spiriting out ISIS adherents from the camps. This strategic decision emanated from their many "success stories" of raising tens of thousands of dollars within the timeline of a mere 10 days as documented in the cases of raising smuggling capital of \$20,000 for 2 Tajik minors and another \$11,000 for the Russian ISIS financier who allegedly had helped many women to exit the camps. This is because these networks witnessed an increasing stream of funds from the ISIS supporters pouring in for the cause of freeing these pro-ISIS detainees, indicating that the majority of ISIS supporters might be deeply moved by their plight, particularly the boys who are ageing in prisons, and willing to help in smuggling out these detainees. This is backed by the observation of these fundraisers having bitterly grumbled on their telegram channels about how they receive lackadaisical responses from the supporters for the fundraising campaigns that focus on providing daily aid to women (food, clothing shelter.)

But in the first place, one wonders how ISIS networks have been able to approach and maintain communication with their target audience by promoting their crowdfunding campaigns followed by showing the supporters the way to transfer funds through their deeply entrenched financial and logistical hubs in different parts of the world enabling the flow of funds from different corners of the world to reach the camps in Syria to aid these women. Their communication with the donors was promoted on their favourite encrypted application Telegram which didn't take down their accounts or block their channels despite their Telegram channels having been reported multiple times. The worst part is these ISIS-linked financial networks are so ensconced in their digital haven of the encrypted app Telegram that they don't even feel the need to mask their illicit terror funding activities as an act of legitimate charitable giving. As stated, depending on the risk factor involved in their financial networks these ISIS-linked Telegram channels bolster their digital presence by oscillating between keeping their channels public or private, facilitated by Telegram's flexible interface that enables extremists to do everything from [self-promotion to fundraising, brand development and propaganda dissemination, to secret plotting of attacks with minimal interference from law enforcement agencies.](#) And if their accounts are even blocked, through a common interconnected Telegram channel, one might have access

to the new link of these ISIS-linked crowdfunding channels within a matter of a few hours with the archived content about their fundraising campaigns posted on their newly created Telegram channel. Thus shutting down social media postings and encrypted app channels soliciting donations for financing terrorism is more challenging than one might expect. For smoothly moving funds to their destination in the camps, this study documented how ISIS-linked individuals using the unregulated nefarious money transfer/ hawala networks and exploiting the loopholes of their country's formal financial system have managed to move, obscure and store money worth thousands of dollars for freeing the female ISIS acolytes and minors from the camps and ultimately help strengthen the group by replenishing its dwindling ranks.

As many children approach adulthood with the risk of being transferred to wartime prisons housing adult ISIS fighters in Kurdish-led SDF-controlled territory of northeastern Syria, coupled with recent efforts undertaken by various states for repatriation of ISIS children, it is apparent that ISIS-affiliated networks— especially the Russian ones – will primarily prioritize devoting their financial resources for freeing teenage boys from Al-Hol. But till that time, these boys who continue to reside in these open-air prison camps in miserable conditions will be exposed to the unprecedented intensified risk of indoctrination and radicalization by female ISIS affiliates who will attempt to instil in them the desire to seek vengeance for their fathers who were killed or were taken as prisoners during battles with the (SDF) and the American-led international coalition. With these children making their way out of the camps numbed to violence, ISIS will have a gold mine discovered in the form of tapping into the children's ideological fanaticism required as an uncompromising stimulant for preparing them as “virtuous” future militant jihadist fighters. Meanwhile, those who are wanting to be repatriated are mainly non-ISIS supporters from the Syrian prison camps who are raising financial capital independently for smuggling themselves out from Syria to illicitly enter Turkey where they hope to surrender themselves to their countries' embassies in the further hope of being repatriated to their homeland to face justice in their countries of origin for their time living under and perhaps serving ISIS. Thus with each passing day, as the humanitarian and security crisis exacerbates the global terrorist landscape, there is a dire need to repatriate these women along with their children from the Syrian detention camps to face justice in their own countries without any of the women being given the option to deny the repatriation of their children. As in the absence of repatriation, children and their families will be resorting to desperate and dangerous measures to leave the camps, [“including ones that put them at physical risk, acute risk of smuggling, risk of recruitment into armed groups and risk of children being pushed into forced marriages”](#). The prolonged stay of the ISIS-linked families in the Syrian detention camps further provides ISIS-linked financial networks with a golden opportunity to buy more time and raise more funds to free their loyal comrades from these camps and prison facilities. Escaped ISIS affiliates could bolster ISIS's human capital strength as they could exploit the well-structured and established international smuggling networks to cross international borders to join other ISIS branches in other conflict theatres constituting international security threats with the group's capability of planning attacks in their home countries. Depending on their expertise and the utility to the terror group the freed militants could assume the role of financial facilitators, frontline fighters, militant jihadist preachers tasked with recruiting new members, elite commanders and strategists spearheading the group's operational trajectory further abetting ISIS resurgence in Syria with major role played by ISIS mothers as they incubate the next generation of ISIS militants.

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HEADLINE	08/29 ISIS, AQ on the move in Africa
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/isis-and-al-qaeda-on-the-move-in-africa-intent-on-spreading-their-influence-and-jihadist-ideology/
GIST	ISIS and al-Qaeda have remained the most active terrorist groups in the world, despite multiple U.S. efforts to target and eliminate both organizations. ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, for example, died when he detonated a suicide vest during a raid by U.S. Special Operations forces in northwestern Syria in October 2019. Abdullah Qardash, an Iraqi national also known as Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi, and the successor to al-Baghdadi, was killed in a U.S. raid in Idlib province in northwestern Syria in February 2022. Ayman al Zawahiri, who became the leader of al-Qaeda after the assassination of the group's founder, Osama bin Laden, in May 2011, was killed by a U.S. drone attack in Afghanistan in July 2022.

ISIS-Core is still active in Iraq and Syria, where sleeper cells perpetrate around 500 low-profile and low-scale attacks each year. Given the relatively mild nature of the attacks, ISIS-Core is seen as an organization that has lost its capacity. ISIS-affiliated groups also are active in the Philippines, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and even more so in Africa. Groups affiliated with al-Qaeda are active primarily in the Middle East and Afghanistan but have made significant forays into Africa.

Both groups, however, are intent on spreading their influence and jihadist beliefs and have made Africa the new epicenter for jihadist violence. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, for example, [reported](#) that jihadist groups – primarily ISIS and al-Qaeda – were responsible for 5,110 violent events in Africa in 2021. Most of these events occurred in five theaters: Somalia, the western Sahel region, the Lake Chad basin, northern Mozambique, and the Sinai Peninsula.

The presence of ISIS and al-Qaeda in Africa, according to the U.S. State Department’s 2020 [Annex of Statistical Information](#), is heavily weighted toward ISIS, which is represented by eight affiliates: ISIS-Somalia, ISIS-Libya, ISIS-Sinai (with operations in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula), ISIS-Central Africa Province (with operations in the Central African Republic), ISIS-Greater Sahara (with operations in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger), ISIS-Mozambique (with operations in Mozambique and Tanzania), ISIS-Democratic Republic of Congo, or ISIS-DRC (with operations in Congo and Uganda), and ISIS-West Africa (with operations in Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon). In contrast, al-Qaeda has three affiliates in Africa: Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), Al-Shabaab, and Ansaru. In terms of incidents and fatalities in 2020, Al Shabaab was the most active al-Qaeda affiliate while ISIS-DRC was the most active ISIS affiliate (see Figure 1). The numbers reported here likely underestimate the actual increase in violence linked to the two affiliated groups, as the [Annex of Statistical Information](#) lists the perpetrator as “unknown” if the group responsible for an incident or fatality is not named or identified in a credible source. For example, the number of attacks by unknown perpetrators in 2020 was around 82 percent (400 incidents) in the Sahel region, where JNIM and ISIS-Greater Sahara have been the most active groups.

Motivations for affiliating with the original ISIS group (often referred to as ISIS-Core) have varied. ISIS-Libya, for example, pledged allegiance to ISIS based on genuine ideological alignment. ISIS-Sinai turned to ISIS for mentorship after losing its senior leadership, while ISIS-Somalia sought to take advantage of the core group’s image. ISIS affiliates in West Africa and the Central African Republic pledged allegiance to ISIS-Core because they anticipated either individual or group benefits, such as global popularity, from aligning with the larger organization. In the western Sahel region, a group of al-Qaeda leaders broke from that organization and pledged allegiance to ISIS because they believed it was a more democratizing force than al-Qaeda. The breakaway group then referred to itself as ISIS-Greater Sahara.

ISIS-Core has real and tangible links with these affiliates, each of which has significant autonomy and are in no way controlled by the core organization. ISIS-Core serves as the main point of dissemination for its affiliates’ media products. The core group offers personnel transfers, approves the replacement of leaders, provides training, shares its tactics and procedures, transfers money and weapons to its affiliates, and orchestrates attacks in areas where its affiliates operate. Despite their autonomy, the affiliates sometimes interact with each other to learn various terrorist tactics. The affiliates engage in extremely violent activities that include beheadings, suicide bombings, prison breaks, and the forceful takeover of cities they want to dominate or govern. Often the goal is to seize and control territory and provide governance for the locals.

Al-Qaeda, meanwhile, also has increased its influence in the African region. Based in Somalia, Al Shabaab has been one of the most active al-Qaeda groups in the world. Its influence extends into neighboring Kenya. JNIM, which arose from the merger of four jihadist groups that operated in the Sahel region of northern Africa, is another active al-Qaeda affiliate in Africa. The group is based in Mali but has continued to wage attacks in Burkina Faso and Niger. In 2021, for example, JNIM carried out terrorist attacks in Togo and Benin, where the group has engaged in clashes with the two countries’ military.

Why Africa?

Various factors play key role in spreading jihadist ideology in Africa.

State Capacity and Endemic Corruption

Al-Qaeda's near-enemy strategy (i.e., the targeting of local regimes) and far-enemy strategy (i.e., the targeting of countries in the Western world), which it adopted after the 9/11 attacks on the United States, prioritize fighting against local governments that oppose jihadist ideologies. According to the 2020 [Annex of Statistical Information](#), the number of fatalities in Muslim countries was around 24,000 out of a total of 29,000 fatalities where jihadist groups had targeted state officials and civilians. Jihadist groups in Africa have been successful in carrying out attacks, controlling territory, and defeating military opponents. In most African countries, jihadist groups are better equipped and use more technologically advanced weapons than their military foes. U.N. peacekeeping missions have been only marginally effective in stemming the violence, largely because the peacekeepers lack the capacity to address the root causes of armed confrontations in the region. Endemic corruption in the African region compounds the problem.

The result is a vicious cycle much like what occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan where millions of Western dollars flowed into the pockets of corrupt African politicians and government officials. Such corruption, unfortunately, is an inseparable element of the governmental system in most African countries. Porous borders on the continent also facilitate the transfer of money and weapons from illicit suppliers to terrorist organizations. ISIS-West Africa militants, for example, easily cross the border between Nigeria and Niger and Nigeria and Cameroon to carry out attacks. Similarly, Al Shabaab takes advantage of the porous border between Somalia and Kenya to access the logistics needed for attacks in these two countries.

Ongoing Clashes and the Pursuit of Popularity

In addition to jihadist groups, Africa has seen violent clashes between groups over religious and ethnic differences. These same groups, however, have watched closely the increasing popularity of ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliates on the continent and understand that fighting under the banner of either group would lead to greater popularity and increased access to the resources needed to crush the enemy. ISIS-Mozambique, for example, evolved from the local religious/ethnic group Ansar al Sunna into the violent terrorist organization it is today. The transition occurred in 2017 when Ansar al Sunna declared its loyalty to ISIS and changed its name to ISIS-Mozambique. Several years later, the U.S. State Department added ISIS-Mozambique to its official list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). Another local religious/ethnic group, the Allied Defense Forces in Congo, declared its loyalty to ISIS and subsequently was added to the State Department's official list of FTOs in 2021.

Strategic Policies of Jihadist Groups

Terrorist organizations are rarely random and senseless in their attacks. They are instead shrewd and calculating when it comes to target selection, message, and intended audience. Al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in Africa, for example, follow a hearts-and-minds policy that involves taking control of an area, operating like a de facto state, and providing logistics for the locals. The intended message to local Muslims is that the terrorist group will ensure their security in the community. For example, al-Qaeda-affiliated JNIM and ISIS-Greater Sahara in the Sahel region and ISIS-West Africa in Nigeria strategically target state institutions and Christian groups and abstain from targeting local Muslims. The local Muslims, in turn, perceive the affiliated groups as being more powerful than the state officials in the territories the groups control. Efforts to win the hearts and minds of the local Muslims generates sympathy for the groups and creates opportunities for the acquisition of operating funds and the recruitment of new members.

Spread Violent Version of Salafism

Almost all Islamist terrorist organizations are under the influence of a twisted version of Salafism that involves a strict (and controversial) interpretation of the Qur'an as espoused by Salafi scholars. Wherever this ideology spreads – be it Asia, Africa, or the Middle East – violent Islamist organizations can find a favorable environment in which to flourish and to threaten regional and global security. For example, the prevalence of Salafist ideology in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Philippines simply makes a bad situation even worse by increasing the number of terrorist groups in Asia. The situation in Africa is quite similar. Salafism in Somalia, for example, played a key role in the emergence of al-Qaeda-affiliated Al Shabaab in that country. Gulf states that have sponsored efforts to spread the Salafist ideology have opened mosques in Africa and assigned clerics to even the smaller villages in rural

Africa where they teach a violent version of Salafism. Moreover, most African students who have chosen to pursue their education in one of the Gulf states return home as adherents of a twisted version of Salafism.

To conclude, both ISIS and al-Qaeda have intensified their expansion efforts in Africa, though ISIS-affiliated groups continue to outnumber al-Qaeda groups on the continent. Local governments lack the necessary resources to defeat these organizations. On the other hand, U.S. counterterrorism strategies in the region target ISIS- and al-Qaeda-affiliated group leaders by conducting military operations, offering training programs for law enforcement and military personnel, and deploying drones to target jihadists. These strategies are efficient and help to mitigate the risks posed by ISIS- and Al Qaeda-affiliated groups. However, policies that are more strategic in addressing the root causes of jihadist terrorism in Africa are needed to defeat these organizations and prevent them from arising anew.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	08/29 Hurricane alley quietest August in 25yrs
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-29/hurricane-alley-hasn-t-been-this-quiet-in-a-quarter-century
GIST	<p>The Atlantic crucible of hurricanes hasn't had a storm all month and if the calm holds it will stand as the quietest August in 25 years.</p> <p>The expanse of ocean between Africa and the Caribbean Sea has only had two stormless Augusts in more than seven decades of recordkeeping -- one in 1961 and the other in 1997, said Phil Klotzbach, lead author of Colorado State University's seasonal storm forecast. August typically is the beginning of the hurricane season's most-active phase.</p> <p>"We're got a chance of making it the entire month without a named storm," Klotzbach said. "It is going to be close."</p> <p>So far this season, the Atlantic has spun up three storms with the last one – Colin – forming in early July. Since then, the region has had a couple of systems swirl up by fail to reach the threshold for storm status. The US National Hurricane Center is watching four patches of thunderstorms and rain right now that could become the season's next storm.</p> <p>One system in the central Atlantic has the best chance, with a 80% probability it will become a storm by Friday.</p> <p>Through the first part of August, dry air sapped any would-be storms before they could start ramping up. There was also some wind shear across the basin that tears at the structure of budding storms.</p> <p>Typically the Atlantic is most rambunctious from about Aug. 20 to Oct. 1, with the statistical peak coming on Sept. 10. Most pre-season forecasts called for an active year with more than the average of 14 storms.</p> <p>A quiet August doesn't offer a clear signal on what the rest of the year will bring. In 1997, there was an El Nino across the Pacific, which increased wind shear in the Atlantic, and only seven storms were named.</p> <p>In 1961, the Pacific was cooler, as it is now, and 12 storms formed, which at the time was above average. Cooler Pacific waters mean less wind shear across the Atlantic, opening the door for storm development. Shear is when wind blows at different directions or speeds at varying altitudes and this can knock the top off budding hurricanes.</p>

	<p>Klotzbach said computer models edged back from calling for an active September, but he also noted that there are a lot of vigorous thunderstorms moving off Africa – the building blocks of hurricanes – which could mean storms are imminent.</p> <p>“But I’m certainly not guaranteeing anything at this point,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 Doctors warn: nerve damage linked to ‘nos’
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/aug/30/doctors-warn-of-rise-in-nerve-damage-linked-to-nitrous-oxide
GIST	<p>Doctors have sounded the alarm over a rise in cases of nerve damage linked to the use of nitrous oxide.</p> <p>In recent years, nitrous oxide – commonly known as “nos” – has become a hugely popular recreational drug. It has reportedly been widely used at festivals this summer.</p> <p>In the 2019-20 Crime Survey for England and Wales, almost 9% of 16- to 24-year-olds said they had taken nitrous oxide in the last year, up from 6.1% in 2012-13.</p> <p>Experts say that as use of the drug has risen, so too have cases of spinal cord and nerve damage, including paralysis.</p> <p>“There is no doubt that we have seen an increase of cases, as this was almost unknown last year and now [we] see cases weekly,” said Dr Nikos Evangelou, an academic neurologist at the University of Nottingham.</p> <p>Writing on Twitter, Evangelou described the situation as an epidemic, adding: “Terrifying to see paralysed young people from laughing gas canisters.”</p> <p>Dr David Nicholl, a neurologist at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS trust, also called the problem an epidemic in a recent TikTok video.</p> <p>“We’re seeing dozens of young people coming into hospital because they’re off their legs; some of them have life-changing neurological injuries,” he said.</p> <p>Discovered by the chemist Joseph Priestley in 1772 – and subsequently the subject of myriad experiments and cartoons – nitrous oxide became a useful tool in medical settings to treat severe pain.</p> <p>While it can induce laughter and hallucinations, it can also cause neurological problems by inactivating the vitamin B12.</p> <p>“B12 is crucial in the production of myelin, which is the fatty sheath around nerves in your body,” said Dr Trevor Pickersgill, a consultant neurologist at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. When B12 is inactivated by nitrous oxide, myelin is no longer kept in good repair. “That causes spinal cord damage, which can be irreversible if untreated,” said Pickersgill.</p> <p>Dr Mark Ellul, a specialist registrar in neurology based in Liverpool, said cases of nerve damage from nitrous oxide use were frequent. “I’d say as a unit we probably see a case every few weeks,” he said. “Most are young people, and many were previously unaware that the substance could be harmful. In some cases the effects can be quite severe and long-lasting.”</p> <p>One study carried out by researchers in Strasbourg reported that five patients were admitted to a tertiary care centre between April 2020 and February 2021 with rapidly progressive neurological symptoms after using nitrous oxide.</p>

	<p>“When I did a retrospective analysis of all patients admitted in 10 years prior to April 2020, not a single patient had been diagnosed with neurological complications due to nitrous oxide abuse at our hospital,” said the lead author, Maximilian Einsiedler.</p> <p>While it is illegal in the UK to supply nitrous oxide for human consumption or to sell it to children, it is not illegal to possess the drug. Users often buy small silver canisters of the gas – known as whippits because of their original purpose as whipped cream chargers – and inhale it from a balloon.</p> <p>However, there are concerns that large canisters of the gas are becoming more common, with giant containers 80 times the size of whippits found in the streets of London after the Notting Hill carnival this weekend.</p> <p>Harry Sumnall, a professor in substance use at Liverpool John Moores University, said there was a lack of hard data on the prevalence of serious problems resulting from nitrous oxide use in the UK.</p> <p>While Sumnall said that even a relatively small rise in cases from a low baseline was of concern to neurologists, he said the people most at risk of significant complications were those exposed to high quantities of the gas.</p> <p>“Just to put it into perspective, [there are] more than 600,000 users in the UK, and most people if they are using it are going to be using it a few times a year, at really low levels of risk,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 More dire sea level as Greenland ice melts
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/29/climate/greenland-ice-sea-levels.html
GIST	<p>The melting of the Greenland ice sheet could eventually raise global sea levels by at least 10 inches even if humans immediately stop burning the fossil fuels that are warming the planet to dangerous levels, according to a new study published on Monday.</p> <p>The study, published in Nature Climate Change, focuses on what researchers call “committed” sea-level rise, a measure that takes into account the warming that has already occurred.</p> <p>That approach differs from most earlier research, which has been based on computer modeling and has generally predicted much lower losses of ice from the Greenland ice sheet. The latest assessment from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for example, projects somewhere between two and five inches of sea-level rise by 2100.</p> <p>The 10-inch increase forecast in the new study, which does not give a timeline, could be much higher if temperatures continue to rise, as they almost certainly will, said Jason Box, a glaciologist at the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland who was the paper’s lead author.</p> <p>Dr. Box said computer modeling typically used by glaciologists so far was “not up to the task” of representing how rapidly ice sheets are melting. His team’s research instead studied satellite measurements taken between 2000 and 2019.</p> <p>In the new study, researchers examined what’s known as the climactic snow line, or the boundary between a snow-covered and snow-free surface, on the ice sheet.</p> <p>The line fluctuates every year in response to cooler or warmer temperatures, and when one area grows larger than the other, the ice sheet moves away from “equilibrium.” In a high-melt year, the snow line is pushed farther up the ice sheet, which means the area that accumulates snow is smaller, resulting in a smaller ice sheet.</p> <p>The major issue with the new study is the lack of a time horizon attached to the predictions, said Sophie Nowicki, an ice sheet expert in the University at Buffalo’s geology department who was not involved in</p>

the research. Do you get that number by 2100, she wrote in an email, “or in thousands and thousands of years?”

A good analogy for the study, she wrote, is the typical growth and weight charts you might see when you take your children to the doctor for a checkup. The charts give you an indication of how tall your child may possibly become, but they are not good at predicting a growth spurt or the precise timing of the growth.

The approach is “more grounded in what has already happened” than past ice sheet modeling, and it takes us beyond what has already been done before, said John Walsh, chief scientist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, who was not involved with the study.

The conclusions indicate that even the most conservative estimate of melting ice could have dangerous human effects, Dr. Walsh said. While 10 inches may not seem like much on average, the sea level does not rise equally everywhere. Some regions, especially lower-lying coastal areas, could be hit with disproportionately devastating flooding.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	08/29 Police quiet on fatal shooting Dutch soldier
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/shootings-indiana-indianapolis-netherlands-44132830108d18ff2a4a2d367132cd7e
GIST	<p>INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Two Dutch soldiers wounded in a downtown Indianapolis shooting that killed another member of their commando unit could soon return to the Netherlands, city police said Monday while providing no new information on the search for the other people involved.</p> <p>The 26-year-old member of the Dutch Commando Corps died of his injuries “surrounded by family and colleagues” after the shooting early Saturday, the country’s Defense Ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>The Marion County coroner’s office in Indianapolis identified the victim as Simmie Poetsema but didn’t immediately release any additional information.</p> <p>Poetsema and the two other soldiers were shot after what Indianapolis police believe was a disturbance outside the hotel where they were staying about 3:30 a.m. Saturday near several downtown bars and nightclubs, authorities said. The soldiers were in the U.S. for training exercises at a southern Indiana military base.</p> <p>Indianapolis police on Monday described the injuries to the two surviving soldiers as “non-life-threatening” and the Dutch Defense Ministry said they were conscious. City police said they were working with U.S. and Dutch agencies to coordinate family members coming to Indianapolis and returning the victims to the Netherlands.</p> <p>Police, however, released no additional information Monday about the circumstances of the shooting nor made any police officials available for interviews. No arrests have been announced.</p> <p>The agency said in a statement that detectives were working to identify those involved in the shooting and that “the release of certain investigative information could negatively impact the ability to obtain justice in this case.”</p> <p>The Indiana National Guard said the soldiers had been training at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center, a 1,000-acre (405-hectare) complex about 70 miles (110 kilometers) southeast of the downtown Indianapolis shooting scene. The Guard said in a statement that the center is used for training by the Department of Defense “as well as other allies.”</p>

HEADLINE	08/30 Safeway gunman angry, liked to fight
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/oregon-portland-2558da6c8fbb839a0544c213ac388847
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The 20-year-old who opened fire in a Bend, Oregon, supermarket, killing two before he turned the gun on himself, was a loner who was passionate about mixed martial arts and was known for getting into fights at the high school where he graduated in 2020.</p> <p>The shooter, identified Monday by police as Ethan Blair Miller, of Bend, “tried to fight quite literally everybody” at Mountain View High School, former classmate Isaac Thomas told The Associated Press. Thomas said the gunman once threatened to shoot him after a fight at their school.</p> <p>Police confirmed Monday they are investigating the “shooter’s writings” but declined to comment further on postings on several online platforms that appear to have been written by him in recent months.</p> <p>In posts on several sites, someone who appears to be the gunman says he’s struggled to recover from the isolation and loneliness of the pandemic, expresses hatred for himself and indicates he planned to attack his alma mater next week, but couldn’t wait until then because “the Rage has become uncontrollable.”</p> <p>Authorities sought a search warrant for digital devices found at the gunman’s apartment and it will take several days to go through those materials and develop a clearer picture, said Police Chief Mike Krantz.</p> <p>“We have that information. A lot of people sent us follow-up information about what has been posted on social media or other outlets and our investigators will sift through that information and make those connections — if it’s truly connected— and ensure that we have accurate information,” he said.</p> <p>Police have no evidence of prior contact with the gunman and he had no criminal record in the area, authorities said.</p> <p>Federal officials were also trying to determine where the gunman got the AR-15-style weapon and shotgun he brought into the store, whether the guns were obtained legally and why he chose the supermarket for his deadly rampage. They found three Molotov cocktails in his car along with a sawed-off shotgun and more ammunition in his apartment, said Bend police spokeswoman Sheila Miller, who is not related to the shooter.</p> <p>Thomas, the former classmate, said the shooter had worked at the Safeway and Thomas had run into him there two years ago.</p> <p>Police credited a Safeway employee and 20-year U.S. Army veteran who was killed in the shooting with possibly forestalling a worse outcome and called the actions of 66-year-old Donald Ray Surrett Jr. heroic.</p> <p>“Mr. Surrett engaged with the shooter, attempted to disarm him and may very well have prevented further deaths. Mr. Surrett acted heroically turning this terrible event,” the police spokeswoman said.</p> <p>Customer Glenn Edward Bennett, 84, of Bend, was also killed Sunday evening, police said.</p> <p>The gunman lived in an apartment complex behind The Forum Shopping Center. Witnesses said he began shooting Sunday evening as soon as he left the complex and continued firing as he entered the shopping complex’s parking lot and then went into the Safeway.</p> <p>Bennett was killed at the store’s entrance, police said, and the shooter then moved through the aisles “spraying shots” from the assault rifle until Surrett confronted him. The entire incident — from the first 911 calls to officers discovering the suspect dead in the store — unfolded in four minutes, Miller said.</p> <p>Police entered the supermarket from the front and rear as shots were still being fired.</p>

	<p>Debora Jean Surret, the ex-wife of the Safeway employee killed in the attack, told AP in a phone interview that Surret served in the Army for 20 years as a combat engineer. He wasn't deployed to active combat zones, but during the 20 years they were married from 1975 to 1995, they were stationed in Germany three times and lived on military bases across the U.S.</p> <p>Bend Mayor Pro Tem Anthony Broadman said Americans "need to guard against the cynicism of thinking of these attacks on order and peace as regular, unavoidable things. I won't accept that."</p> <p>"We know that in the face of the kind of chaos that we saw last night, we had brave first responders, brave citizens, people willing to stand up for their neighbors," he added.</p> <p>The shooter graduated from Mountain View High School in Bend in 2020, according to online records, and Thomas remembered him as an extremely combative person who had few friends.</p> <p>Thomas said he was suspended for a week as a freshman for fighting with the gunman. The gunman held onto a grudge from that fight and once threatened to shoot him, Thomas told AP.</p> <p>"At one point he said he was going to shoot me and I was like, 'Get over yourself' because I didn't think he had a gun, but I guess I was wrong," Thomas said.</p> <p>Thomas recalled running into the shooter in 2020 in the parking lot of the Safeway, where the gunman was gathering up carts as part of his job. He recognized him and threatened him again although several years had gone by, Thomas said.</p> <p>"It was kind of crazy when I heard about it," he said of the shooting. "But it makes sense that he chose Safeway because he worked there and he knew the layout."</p>
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HEADLINE	08/30 Madagascar police shooting leaves 19 dead
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/madagascar-police-shooting-leaves-19-dead-police-say-2022-08-30/
GIST	<p>ANTANANARIVO, Aug 30 (Reuters) - Madagascar police killed 19 people and injured 21 when they opened fire on Monday on a crowd trying to storm a police station to seek revenge against suspected criminals, police said on Tuesday.</p> <p>The shooting took place in the town of Ikongo, about 330 km (205 miles) southeast of the capital Antananarivo, and security forces have sent reinforcements to restore order in the area, according to a police statement.</p> <p>The trouble started when a crowd attempted to break into the police station to get hold of four people who were being detained on suspicion of kidnapping an albino child and murdering his mother, according to the police.</p> <p>The child has not been found. In some African countries, albino children are sometimes abducted by people who believe they can be used for ritual purposes, though in this case there was no information about the motive of the alleged abduction.</p> <p>The police statement said the situation in Ikongo was now calm, and the families of the people killed in the shooting had been offered financial compensation by the security forces.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Shootings spike in pandemic; new normal?
SOURCE	https://www.kpcc.org/2022-08-29/shootings-spiked-during-the-pandemic-the-spike-now-looks-like-a-new-normal
GIST	SEATTLE — When the U.S. homicide rate jumped nearly 30% in 2020, experts hoped it was a temporary blip — a fleeting symptom of pandemic pressures and civil unrest.

"I lost a couple of people around that time, due to gun violence," says LaMaria Pope, who works for a youth outreach program in the Seattle area called "Choose 180."

Three summers later, she says that violence persists, and young people are more likely to be armed with a gun.

"Sixteen, and 17, 18 and up — they only feel safe if they have one. It's becoming a jacket — they can't leave the house without one," she says.

Hopes for a rapid decline in the pandemic murder spike are fading. National statistics for 2022 aren't yet available, but you can get a sneak peak from [an informal year-to-date tally of murders in major cities](#) compiled by data analyst Jeff Asher. The total count in those cities has dipped slightly lower than last year, but it's still [well above pre-pandemic levels](#). And in 40% of the cities listed, homicides are trending higher.

Some of the worst trouble spots are cities such as [Philadelphia](#) and [Baltimore](#), where year-to-date homicides are rivaling the high tallies of 2020 and 2021.

In Portland, Ore., the mayor has [declared an "emergency"](#) over gun violence, as the city struggles to reel in an annual murder count that shot up to 88 in 2021, from 36 in 2019.

Even some smaller cities, such as Little Rock, Ark., are in danger of [eclipsing last year's murder numbers](#).

"This is definitely not the '90s"

But it's not just that the numbers remain high. The nature of the gun violence itself has changed, according to those who watch these crimes closely.

"This is definitely not the '90s, what we're seeing," says Elyne Vaught, a prosecutor in King County, Wash. He's part of a program called "[Shots Fired](#)," which counts and categorizes illegal shootings in a county that includes Seattle. The program seeks to identify people at risk of getting involved in the violence, and intervene by offering social services delivered by non-profits.

"The '90s was more gang-oriented, there was much more organized, sort of targeted shootings," Vaught says. "Today, it's petty offenses, petty conflicts, reckless shootings."

Vaught says you can see the "rise in reckless-type shootings" in the county statistics, where the [number of shots fired has more than doubled, compared to the same period in 2019](#), and with more shots fired per victim.

Police around the country have noticed this trend. [A new report](#) from the Major Cities Chiefs Association points to "incidents of individuals indiscriminately shooting into large crowds while discharging massive amounts of ammunition," such as the [April mass shooting in downtown Sacramento](#).

The chiefs point to the availability of extended ammunition magazines, as well as the growing popularity of "[auto sear](#)" [switches](#), small after-market devices that turn semi-automatic Glock pistols into illegal automatics, capable of spraying bullets. (Similar attachments also exist for AR-15-style rifles, but police worry more about handguns, which are used far more often in crimes.)

Post-pandemic "gunplay"

Anecdotal, [gunfire has become a more common sound](#) in many urban and suburban areas. Jimmy Hung, chief deputy for the juvenile division of the King County Prosecutor's Office, says he's noticed the change.

"I live in West Seattle and I've never felt, like, leaving my house, I was in danger of being shot — I still don't," Hung says. "But having lived there now for nearly 20 years, I can confidently say that when I sleep

at night and I have my window open, I certainly hear more gunshots today than I did when I first moved into the neighborhood."

Hung wonders if those shots are connected to a rise in the "demonstrative" use of guns by young men. A 16-year-old we're calling "G" recalls being at a party in the same neighborhood — West Seattle — and observing exactly that. (We're withholding his name, given his age and the topic.)

"All we hear is 'pop-pop-pop,' " he says, describing the incident.

He says it started with a dispute between two groups of young people, and took an ominous turn when some came back holding backpacks in front of them, one hand concealed inside.

"That only means, usually, two things," he says. "Either they're having a hard time finding something. Or — it's usually just them holding a gun, ready to pull it out and fire."

Gun violence often starts online

"G" says he doesn't have a gun, and most of the guns he sees in the hands of acquaintances are on social media.

"Mostly Snapchat," he says. "[The videos are] them usually smoking in a car and then holding out a gun, flashing the laser sight. Just saying, 'Hey, I have this, don't mess with me. Be scared of me, basically.' "

When the guns come out in person, he says it's often after warnings online. For instance, someone will post the video of a fistfight, which in turn will prompt others to promise to avenge the loser.

"One of the friends might say, 'Oh, I'm gonna slide for you. I'm going to slide real quick with a pole on me,' " G says, where the term "pole" is slang for gun.

"That usually means, 'Hey, we don't care that you lost, but we're gonna go get the deed done,' " he says. Temple University criminologist Jason Gravel, who studies how young people acquire and use guns, says the role of social media may be the biggest change of the last few recent years.

"It might look like some random shooting on the street, but if that was preceded by a bunch of verbal threats online or in social media, you don't see the first part of the conflict, you just see the end result," Gravel says.

More guns, more shootings?

At the "Choose 180" program in suburban Seattle, Lemaria Pope thinks the year-long closure of in-person schooling in the region led to many kids discovering guns.

"Kids were finding their parents' guns, because they're in the house, no school, no work. I definitely think during that pandemic, it just opened up a window," Pope says.

There may have been more guns around for kids to find. Firearms dealers reported record sales during the pandemic, and a [recent article in the Annals of Internal Medicine](#) estimates that 2.9% of U.S. adults became new gun owners. By extension, the authors estimate 5 million children were "newly exposed" to firearms in their households.

At the prosecuting attorney's office, Hung believes irresponsible gun owners are part of the problem.

"I don't believe that we have emphasized or prioritized enough the secure storage of guns or the responsible ownership of guns," he says. "And so kids are gaining access to guns either through, you know, theft or people misplacing them and them just getting in the wrong hands."

Less risk of getting caught

Others reject this explanation for heightened gun violence, saying people who want guns have always found ways to get them.

Anthony Branch, 26, got into trouble for carrying a gun when he was a teen. Watching the gun culture in his neighborhood, he thinks more minors and felons are carrying guns illegally now for one simple reason: "Defund the police," as he puts it.

Memorial set up by friends and family of Jashawna Hollingsworth, who was shot and killed outside a shopping mall in south Seattle in late 2021. The slaying remains unsolved.

"They're only going to search for priorities," he says of the Seattle Police Department, which lost hundreds of officers after the protests that followed the 2020 murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis. At the same time, he acknowledges the violence itself may also be a deciding factor.

"What are you gonna do when you win the fight, and somebody shoots you? Or you have a beef that's so bad that you lose the fight, and they still shoot you?" he asks. "So that's why you have all these young people — and older cats too — want to carry so much. Because of the uncertainty of it."

Criminologist Gravel says society should take seriously the fact that people in certain communities feel so unsafe, they want to carry guns.

"When you look at the rates of violence, if you lived in that community, I don't know if I would blame you if you wanted to carry a gun for protection," he says. "It's not entirely irrational to do so, even if it puts them more at risk."

As to the question of whether the pandemic-era violence is here to stay, Gravel says the jury is still out.

"There's a lot of research that suggests that violence is kind of operates like a contagion," he says. "It's going to take a while until the chain of conflicts that started in 2020 ends — and it might never end! It might take a while for it to die down on its own if we don't intervene and try to stop these conflicts before they happen."

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HEADLINE	08/29 Concern: anti-Hindu attacks on rise
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2022/08/29/hindu-gandhi-taco-bell-punjab/
GIST	<p>A tirade recorded at a California Taco Bell punctuated a string of discriminatory incidents this month aimed at Indian Americans and Hindu temples, deepening concerns that “Hinduphobia” is on the rise.</p> <p>Krishnan Iyer had stopped into a Fremont, Calif., Taco Bell near his home on Aug. 21 to pick up an online order for his son, when a man in a black T-shirt and shorts and red sneakers began attacking his religion, according to eight minutes of video filmed and uploaded by Iyer. The man berated him unprompted, Iyer said, spewing slurs and chiding him for his vegetarianism while making much of ordering beef for himself. Many Hindus refrain from eating any part of cows.</p> <p>The man insulted Iyer’s appearance, repeatedly calling him “dirty Hindu” and “ugly Hindu” and telling him he “bathes in cow urine” and eats “cow s---.” The man also spat in Iyer’s direction, Iyer said, but missed and hit the food service counter instead.</p> <p>“It was very abundantly clear to me that he was trying to stir the pot and try to push his agenda,” said Iyer, who called the attack “disgusting.” “I didn’t have any reason to react to him. I do a lot of meditation and yoga, and that gave me a sense of perspective that his soul was in distress.”</p> <p>Iyer said he had no idea what had spurred the man’s ire. After posting his video, he said, he learned from friends that an independence movement in the northern Indian state of Punjab has been stirring high feelings among Punjabis in North America. In Iyer’s video, the perpetrator can be heard speaking Punjabi</p>

and denouncing Indira Gandhi, the former Indian prime minister who was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards, and displaying tattoos of a phrase from a Sikh prayer.

Two Fremont police officers responded to a call from another patron, and the perpetrator was forced to leave the establishment. Sgt. Kim Macdonald of the Fremont Police Department said an investigation is ongoing.

The incident in California was followed days later by [a similar one](#) in Plano, Tex., and both came just weeks after a Gandhi statue was vandalized and desecrated outside a Queens temple twice in less than a month. After the second statue toppling, New York Mayor Eric Adams (D) and several faith leaders from the surrounding Hindu, Jewish and Sikh communities gathered at the temple to denounce what the New York Police Department is investigating as a hate crime. In a [statement](#) from the Hindu American Foundation, Executive Director Suhag Shukla noted that surveillance videos recorded the attackers using phrases supportive of the same Punjabi separatist movement.

According to the FBI's hate-crime [data explorer](#), last updated in 2020, there were 11 hate offenses recorded that year as "anti-Hindu bias," compared to 110 anti-Muslim and 89 anti-Sikh incidents.

But a [study](#) from Rutgers University's Network Contagion Lab, published in July, found that anti-Hindu sentiments are on the rise. In a briefing Thursday, hosted by the Coalition of Hindus of North America, lead researcher Joel Finkelstein pointed to memes and online social cyber signals referring to perceived "dirty" and "scamming" qualities of Hindus, as well as depictions of Hindus being brutalized. Many of the memes, he said, were manufactured out of commonly used tropes against Jewish people, using tilaks, swastikas and bindis to signify Hindu culture.

"The internet has provided a fertile ground for the large-scale organization and weaponization of Hinduphobia by extremist communities, state actors and hateful players in the online space," Finkelstein said.

Because the verbiage and tropes surrounding Hinduphobia are not yet recognized by social media platforms like Twitter, this kind of targeted hatred, which "reliably precedes real-world violence," largely goes unchecked, he said.

"Unfortunately, these incidents are evidence of the untackled Hinduphobia that refuses to be given mainstream acknowledgment," said Pushpita Prasad, of the Coalition of Hindus of North America. She said COHNA often battles with academics, activists and journalists to acknowledge the existence of anti-Hindu hate.

Iyer said both COHNA and the Hindu American Foundation contacted him, and the latter group contacted the FBI and the Fremont City Council. He said he is "truly grateful" for the outpouring of support he has received from people around the world.

"Being a Hindu means you are a universal human," Iyer said. "At the end of the day, everyone has a soul, and every soul has a light. That's the true spirit of Hinduism."

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HEADLINE	08/30 UK street party: fatal stabbing, 200 arrests
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/aug/28/notting-hill-carnival-reclaims-streets-with-effusion-of-colour-and-joy https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/aug/30/fatal-stabbing-at-notting-hill-carnival
GIST	Thousands of people flooded the streets of west London in a sea of colour and noise as the Notting Hill carnival came back after a three-year hiatus. For many, the return of Europe's biggest street party was an opportunity to celebrate African-Caribbean culture and reflect on the events of recent years.

The two-day festival kicked off with a tribute to the 72 people who died in the Grenfell Tower blaze in June 2017. Members of the Emancipated Run Crew ran the parade route in honour of the victims of the blaze, while revellers and music came to a halt at 3pm to observe a 72-second silence.

The carnival first took place in 1966 but was forced online during the pandemic. But it came back stronger than ever on Sunday, designated Family Day, with more than 2 million people expected to gather across the bank holiday weekend.

The festivities started at sunrise for those who took part in the J'Ouvert celebrations where people douse each other with paints and powders to celebrate the opening of the carnival.

Later, partygoers with paint-stained faces lined up as hundreds of dancers and children in flamboyant costumes took part in the parade. The sound of steel drum bands filled the streets as revellers queued up to buy jerk chicken and Caribbean cocktails from an array of stalls.

A 21-year-old man died after being stabbed at [Notting Hill carnival](#), the Metropolitan police said, adding that more than 200 arrests were made during the event.

A police statement said: "At around 8pm on Monday August 29 officers became aware of a stabbing in Ladbroke Grove, under the Westway flyover.

"Officers provided emergency first aid to the victim – a 21-year-old man – until the arrival of [London](#) Ambulance service paramedics.

"They were able to extract him through significant crowds in challenging circumstances to a waiting ambulance.

"He was taken to a west London hospital where, despite the best efforts of medical staff, he was pronounced dead.

"His next of kin have been informed and are being supported by specialist officers."

The force said "a number of violent incidents and serious stabbings" prompted a section 60 order to be put in place until 1am on Tuesday within the event's borders. Section 60 allows police to stop and search people without suspicion of illegality.

Police said 209 arrests had been made by early Tuesday, including 46 for assault, 36 for possession of drugs, 33 for possession of an offensive weapon, 27 public order offences and eight sexual assaults.

There were 35 arrests the force labelled "other": 10 for possession of psychoactive substances, seven for drink/drug driving, five for criminal damage and one each for theft and robbery.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Aspiring Proud Boy Capitol riot: 55months
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/29/us/joshua-pruitt-proud-boy-sentenced-jan-6.html
GIST	<p>During the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, Joshua Pruitt, a bartender, personal trainer and aspiring Proud Boys member from Silver Spring, Md., wore a tactical glove and an ankle monitor from a recent offense and climbed a makeshift ladder into the building, according to prosecutors, "seeking to overturn the election."</p> <p>Mr. Pruitt, now 40, was the ideal Proud Boys recruit, they said: He advertised his desire to participate in the violence; took part in standoffs between the mob and the police and at one point, came face to face with Senator Chuck Schumer's group after they fled the Senate chamber. According to court documents</p>

and [widely shared video footage](#), the senator was ushered quickly in the opposite direction by his security team.

“One look at Pruitt, and the leader of Senator Schumer’s security detail immediately saw the threat,” Matthew M. Graves, the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, wrote in the government’s sentencing memorandum.

“This Proud Boys initiate was a one-man symbol of the angry mob at the Capitol that day,” he added. Mr. Graves’s office prosecuted the case together with counterterrorism officials at the Department of Justice.

On Monday, a federal judge sentenced Mr. Pruitt to 55 months in prison, followed by 36 months of supervised release on a felony charge stemming from his actions during the breach. He also must pay \$2,000 in restitution.

“There was nothing patriotic about what happened that day, far from it,” Judge Timothy J. Kelly of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia said Monday in court, [NBC News reported](#). He added, “It was a national disgrace.”

Mr. Pruitt’s lawyer, Robert L. Jenkins Jr., said by phone on Monday that he and his client were disappointed with the outcome.

“He did not possess any weapons; did not assault any law enforcement officers and did not get in any physical altercations with anyone else on that day,” Mr. Jenkins said, adding that his client had received the longest sentence of anyone who had pleaded guilty and was not convicted of assaulting any law enforcement officers.

“He acknowledged that what he did on Jan. 6 was wrong, but in comparison,” Mr. Jenkins added, “his sentence is particularly harsh.”

[According to prosecutors](#), at about 12:30 p.m. on the day of the attack, Mr. Pruitt, who at that time was in the process of joining the Proud Boys, marched toward the Capitol together with the far-right group, wearing a cutoff T-shirt with the logo of the Punisher, an antihero known for enacting violent vigilante justice.

By about 2:10 p.m., he was on a restricted area of the Capitol’s Northwest Lawn, where he saw rioters push through a line of law enforcement officers and go up the stairs to the Upper West Terrace. Mr. Pruitt followed them using a “makeshift ladder,” prosecutors said.

At about 2:14 p.m., he leaped over a railing and then entered the Capitol through the Senate Wing Door. Mr. Pruitt threw a wooden sign, and he was one of the first rioters to enter the Crypt. He then moved to the Capitol Visitor Center, they said, where he “picked up a chair and tossed it.”

It was at this time that Mr. Schumer and his security detail, who had evacuated from the Senate Chamber, were walking up a ramp toward the elevators in the northern part of the visitor center, according to prosecutors. A member of the security detail, they said, saw Pruitt approaching and “reversed course, running away from the elevator and back down the ramp.”

At about 2:52 p.m., Mr. Pruitt climbed out of the building through a window. He was arrested that night for violating a curfew in effect in the city. He was later indicted on several charges, including civil disorder, destruction of government property and acts of physical violence in the Capitol grounds or buildings.

Mr. Pruitt pleaded guilty in June to a charge of obstruction of an official proceeding. Mr. Jenkins, his lawyer, said that other charges were dropped as part of a plea agreement.

In an email, a spokesman for Mr. Schumer said the senator “expresses his deepest appreciation for the heroic work of the Capitol Police on Jan. 6 and every day to keep the Capitol and all who work there safe.” In the government’s sentencing memorandum, prosecutors had argued that Mr. Pruitt should receive a 60-month sentence.

They said that even while wearing an electronic ankle monitor, Mr. Pruitt — who had just days earlier been released on probation after being charged with violating a temporary protective order obtained by a former girlfriend — had advertised his desire to participate in the violent attack.

After his arrest, they added, “the defiant Pruitt doubled down, spreading false information about the riot, claiming he had done nothing wrong and had no regrets.” In a series of social media videos, prosecutors said, Mr. Pruitt “continued to espouse violence and threaten others.”

Mr. Jenkins said that his client had no plans to appeal the decision because he “just wants to move on with his life.” While his client regretted his behavior during the attack, he added, he still believed the claims of election fraud. Those claims have been shown to be [baseless](#).

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HEADLINE	08/29 Portland violent weekend: 4 dead, 9 injured
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/3-killed-9-injured-in-violent-weekend-across-portland-police-say
GIST	<p>Police say four people are dead and nine others were injured in Portland during a violent weekend marked by several shootings.</p> <p>Portland Police said its officers responded to four homicides since Friday night.</p> <p>Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler issued the following statement to KATU about the city's weekend violence:</p> <p><i>This weekend’s bloodshed only brought more grieving, trauma and pain to our community. I will continue to work with local law enforcement and community-based partners to use every resource available to help end this senseless violence. I won’t stop until gun violence stops.</i></p> <p><u>FRIDAY - 9:30 p.m.</u></p> <p>Portland Police officers say a man died after a shooting that was reported in Portland's Old Town neighborhood on Friday night, marking their first homicide investigation of the weekend.</p> <p>Witnesses reported the shooting near Northwest 6th Avenue and Flanders Street at about 9:30 p.m. Friday. Arriving officers found a man with gunshot wounds. He was taken to the hospital, where he later died.</p> <p><u>SATURDAY – 7 A.M.</u></p> <p>On Saturday, August 27, 2022, at 7:01 a.m., officers from the East Precinct responded to a disturbance call in the 3200 block of Southeast 92nd Avenue. Officers arrived to find an adult female who was deceased.</p> <p>33-year-old Mohamed Osman Adan was arrested and has been booked into the Multnomah County Detention Center on the charges of Murder in the Second Degree (Domestic Violence) and Unlawful Use of a Weapon.</p> <p>If anyone has additional information about this incident, please contact Detective Rico Beniga can be reached at (503)823-0457 or at Rico.beniga@police.portlandoregon.gov or Detective Erik Kammerer at Erik.Kammerer@police.portlandoregon.gov.</p> <p>The identity of the victim will be released after they are positively identified, the Medical Examiner has confirmed cause of death, and after family members have been notified.</p> <p><u>SUNDAY – 1 A.M.</u></p>

On August 28, 2022, at 12:59 a.m., Officers were dispatched to the area of North Going Street and North Basin Avenue regarding someone shot. As Air 1 flew over, they saw what appeared to be speed racers leaving the location.

One victim showed up at a local hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. A second victim showed up in a separate vehicle with a non-life-threatening injury.

Arrested at the hospital were 18-year-old Twana Osman and a 17-year-old juvenile. Case #22-231453

SUNDAY – 3 A.M.

On Sunday, August 28, 2022, at 3:03 a.m., officers responded to the area just south of Northeast Glisan and Northeast 99th Street regarding a female firing a gun and then possibly leaving in a vehicle. Officers found no victim of a shooting. A canvas of the area found one single shell casing.

As officers were leaving the scene, a vehicle arrived back at the location with a driver who matched the description of a caller. The driver refused to listen to officers when she parked, and began yelling at them as she walked into her apartment. Moments later she came back out in changed clothes and refused any contact the officers.

Due to the fact there was no victim found, no actual witness to her shooting a handgun and no shell casing evidence, officers disengaged and forwarded the case to ECST. Case ##22-231537

SUNDAY - 3:20 A.M.

On Sunday, August 28, 2022 at 3:23 a.m., Officers were dispatched to the area of North Force and North Marine Drive regarding a person shot. The man had a non-life-threatening wound and refused transport to the hospital. The victim said he was dumpster diving in the area, when a person yelled at him to stop and then fired a shot. Case #22-231537

SUNDAY - 4 A.M.

On Sunday August 28, 2022, at approximately 3:55 a.m., Officers responded to a disturbance in the 14900 Block of Southeast Powell. Information was very convoluted, but it was determined there was a female shot in the leg inside a vehicle outside the residence. Police also learned the suspect might be still inside the house.

A plan was formulated to do a rescue of the female and bring her back to a waiting ambulance. Officers and Sergeants approached the residence and upon arrival, encountered two males outside the residence along with the wounded female inside the car. Officers placed a tourniquet on the victim's leg and evacuated her in a patrol car to the waiting ambulance. The wound is believed to be non-life-threatening. Officers then detained the two males and two more females inside the residence. The residence was cleared and no more victims were found. The case was referred to the Enhanced Community Safety Team (ECST). Case #22-231561

SUNDAY - 9:20 P.M.

On Sunday, August 28, 2022, at around 9:20 p.m., Officers responded to the area of Southeast 122nd and East Burnside Street and found a man and a woman, both suffering from gunshot wounds. The woman suffered a gunshot wound and was transported to a local hospital with non-life threatening injuries. The man was transported to a local hospital as a trauma injury. Nobody was taken into custody. Case #22-232225.

SUNDAY - 9:30 P.M.

On Sunday, August 28, 2022, at 9:32 p.m., officers responded to a shooting call in the 600 Block of Southeast 148th Avenue. [Officers arrived and found a man who was shot and appeared to be deceased.](#) Medical arrived and confirmed that the victim was deceased.

The Portland Police Homicide Unit responded to investigate. If anyone has information about this incident, please contact Detective Jason Koenig at jason.koenig@police.portlandoregon.gov (503)823-

0889 or Detective Michael Greenlee at michael.greenlee@police.portlandoregon.gov (503)823-0871, and reference case number 22-232231.

SUNDAY - 10:45 P.M.

On August 28, 2022, at 10:47 p.m., officers were dispatched to [a shooting in the area of Northeast I-5 over Northeast Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard](#). There were hundreds of people and cars in the area participating in an apparent illegal street takeover event, making it difficult for officers to respond and investigate the shooting. Officers eventually arrived and found a man suffering from an apparent non-life-threatening gunshot wound.

Officers eventually learned that one additional gunshot victim was driven to a hospital in Washington with non-life threatening wounds, and another was driven by personal vehicle south, with unknown gunshot wounds.

There is nobody in custody and is actively being investigated. Case #22-232288

SUNDAY - 11 P.M.

On August 28, 2022, at 10:57 p.m., Officers from North Precinct were dispatched to an overdose call at 15 Northeast Broadway. When officers arrived, they found a man who was actually suffering from a gunshot wound. The man was confirmed deceased by medical on-scene.

The Portland Police Homicide Unit responded to investigate. If anyone has information about this incident, please contact Detective Jennifer Hertzler at jennifer.hertzler@police.portlandoregon.gov (503)823-1040 or Detective Rico Beniga at rico.beniga@police.portlandoregon.gov and reference case number 22-232298.

The identity of the victim will be released after they are positively identified, the Medical Examiner has confirmed cause of death, and after family members have been notified.

MONDAY – 3 A.M.

On Monday, August 29, 2022, at 3:11 a.m. Officers were dispatched to a local gas station, located in the 600 Block of Southeast Grand Avenue regarding a ride-share driver who had been assaulted. Officers arrived and determined the driver picked up a fare and was immediately held at gunpoint by the passenger.

The driver was forced to drive the passenger around the area for a short while. The victim was able to convince the suspect she had to get gas, at which time she was able to get away from her car and the suspect. As the suspect was leaving the area on foot, he fired a single shot (most likely in the air). A single casing was located in the area. Assault Detectives were notified for follow-up. Case #22-232410

KATU spoke with several people working in neighborhoods impacted by gun violence over the weekend, including Northeast Portland.

Jamie Walton said safety is a growing concern.

"I grew up here my whole life and we're so desensitized to gun violence and gang violence and people dying. Like, it's expected to hear at least one to seven people dying every single day within a mile of where I live, within a mile of work," she said.

Walton said she wants to see the city take more action.

"There was three shootings within a block of my child's school within a block of my kid's school where I grew up. I grew up in Southeast Portland. That neighborhood I used to walk through there when I was seven/eight years old, same age as my kids, going to the Dairy Queen," she said.

Joe Lewis is the general manager at Plus Dispensary in Southeast Portland. Lewis said he's becoming increasingly worried about the safety of his employees.

	<p>"I've noticed there's a lot more gun violence in general. Things are happening on a more frequent basis. It seems that are happening for I wouldn't say no reason but it's happening just randomly," he said.</p> <p>Lewis said the shootings are impacting business too.</p> <p>"It's a little bit more difficult to recruit employees, it's a little bit more difficult to staff a night shift. It seems like that, from my perspective, is making it more difficult for me," he said.</p> <p>The dispensary manager said he is optimistic that things can improve, and he's hopeful the city will use new tools to achieve that goal moving forward.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/29 Police: 'heroic' worker confronted gunman
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Police-2-killed-in-Oregon-grocery-store-suspect-17404200.php
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A Safeway employee who previously served in the U.S. Army for two decades attacked a gunman in the produce section of the Bend, Oregon, supermarket, police said Monday, possibly preventing more casualties from a shooting that left the employee and one other person dead.</p> <p>Police hailed the employee, 66-year-old Donald Ray Surrett Jr., of Bend, as a hero and said his actions may have saved shoppers at the store in the high-desert city ringed by mountains in the central part of the state. Customer Glenn Edward Bennett, 84, of Bend, was also killed Sunday evening, police spokeswoman Sheila Miller said.</p> <p>"Mr. Surrett engaged with the shooter, attempted to disarm him and may very well have prevented further deaths. Mr. Surrett acted heroically turning this terrible event," Miller said at a news conference as she struggled against tears.</p> <p>Police said Monday the shooter died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound; his body was found by police near an AR-15-style weapon and a shotgun. Police identified the gunman as Ethan Blair Miller, 20, of Bend.</p> <p>The gunman lived in an apartment complex behind The Forum Shopping Center. Witnesses said he began shooting Sunday evening as soon as he left the complex and continued firing as he entered the shopping complex's parking lot and then went into the Safeway.</p> <p>Bennett was killed at the store's entrance, police said, and the shooter then moved through the aisles "spraying shots" from the assault rifle until Surrett confronted him. The entire incident — from the first 911 calls to officers discovering the suspect dead in the store — unfolded in four minutes, Miller said.</p> <p>Police entered the supermarket from the front and rear as shots were still being fired.</p> <p>Debora Jean Surrett, the ex-wife of the Safeway employee killed in the attack, told The Associated Press in a phone interview that Surrett served in the Army for 20 years as a combat engineer.</p> <p>He wasn't deployed to active combat zones, but during the 20 years they were married from 1975 to 1995, they were stationed in Germany three times and lived on military bases across the U.S.</p> <p>"They're trained to be the first ones to go into war and the last ones to come home," she told the AP.</p> <p>Bend Mayor Pro Tem Anthony Broadman said Americans "need to guard against the cynicism of thinking of these attacks on order and peace as regular, unavoidable things. I won't accept that."</p> <p>"We know that in the face of the kind of chaos that we saw last night, we had brave first responders, brave citizens, people willing to stand up for their neighbors," he added.</p>

Authorities later found three Molotov cocktails and a sawed-off shotgun in the shooter's car. The Oregon State Police bomb squad was called in to sweep the store, the car and the suspect's apartment for explosives, authorities said, forcing the evacuation of eight surrounding apartments on Monday morning.

Miller said reports that there was a second shooter were not true.

Authorities are seeking a search warrant to comb through online materials on an unspecified number of digital devices they found at the shooter's apartment but declined to comment on reports that the suspect posted his plans online in advance. Bend police are working with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to determine where the suspect got his weapons and if he did so legally, Miller said.

“We are aware that the shooter may have posted information online regarding his plan. We’re investigating this,” she said. “We have no evidence of previous threats or prior knowledge of the shooter. We received information about the shooter’s writings after the incident had taken place. And the shooter has no criminal history in the area.”

The shooter graduated from Mountain View High School in Bend in 2020, according to online records, and a former classmate remembered him as an extremely combative person who had few friends.

He was a huge fan of mixed martial arts and “tried to fight everyone at Mountain View and kept getting his (expletive) kicked and he just never learned,” said Isaac Thomas, who was suspended for a week as a freshman for fighting with the gunman. The gunman held onto a grudge from that fight and once threatened to shoot him, Thomas told AP.

“At one point he said he was going to shoot me and I was like, ‘Get over yourself’ because I didn’t think he had a gun, but I guess I was wrong,” Thomas said.

Thomas recalled running into the shooter in 2020 in the parking lot of the Safeway, where the gunman was gathering up carts as part of his job. He recognized him and threatened him again although several years had gone by, Thomas said.

“It was kind of crazy when I heard about it,” he said of the shooting. “But it makes sense that he chose Safeway because he worked there and he knew the layout.”

Oregon's elected leaders reacted to the shooting Monday with pledges to fight for more gun control.

Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, said in a statement that the shooting was one of several in Oregon over weekend and that “Oregonians deserve to be safe from gun violence.”

Oregon residents will vote in November on one of the strictest gun-control measures in the nation. If passed, Measure 114 would ban large capacity magazines over 10 rounds — except for current owners, law enforcement and the military — and require a permit to purchase any gun.

To qualify for a permit, an applicant would need to complete an approved firearm safety course, pay a fee, provide personal information, submit to fingerprinting and photographing and pass a criminal background check. The state police would create a firearms database.

Bend is a city of about 97,000 approximately 160 miles (257 kilometers) southeast of Portland, Oregon.

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HEADLINE	08/29 Phoenix gunman deranged ‘shooting spree’
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/phoenix-gunman-in-tactical-gear-kills-two-people-in-deranged-shooting-sprees-outside-mo?ref=home

<p>GIST</p>	<p>A gunman clad in tactical gear went on a terrifying “shooting spree” in Phoenix, Arizona, killing two people in a motel parking lot and injuring five others, including two cops, authorities say.</p> <p>Police said the rampage ended only after the suspected gunman appeared to kill himself in a nearby parking lot. Authorities had not identified him by Monday morning.</p> <p>The rampage started near a Days Inn motel around 8:30 p.m., cops said. Security footage showed the gunman exit a room wearing tactical gear and a helmet, then open fire into the building.</p> <p>Moments later, cops say the gunman fired shots toward a car as it pulled into the motel’s parking lot, striking and killing a man and woman who were inside.</p> <p>Cops were dispatched to the area and a shootout ensued between them and the gunman.</p> <p>Multiple patrol cars were “riddled with bullets,” cops said, and two officers were struck—one in the shoulder by a bullet, the other in the face by shrapnel.</p> <p>The first officer struck was able to get out of his patrol car and return fire at the gunman, cops said. That officer was then pulled to safety and transported to a local hospital along with his injured colleague. Both are expected to survive, though one remained hospitalized on Monday morning.</p> <p>While some officers engaged the gunman, witnesses said others ran to nearby businesses and cars trapped in traffic to evacuate bystanders. Some caught in the chaos fled on foot, leaving their cars behind.</p> <p>“We heard a bunch of gunfire and whatnot, then a bunch of cops pull up behind us, run up to our door, tell us to turn our car off and get out and run the opposite way,” one witness told LLN Arizona. “I didn’t know what to think. I didn’t know what to do.”</p> <p>Thunderous gunshots can be heard on video from the scene that’s begun circulating on social media. Cops say the gunman also threw a Molotov cocktail into a nearby restaurant, but it didn’t ignite.</p> <p>The gunman fired more than 100 rounds in the shootout, Phoenix Police Chief Jeri Williams told KTAR News on Monday morning, adding, “Keep in mind, this isn’t a handgun—this a rifle,” she said.</p> <p>The chief indicated that she was pleasantly surprised that more people weren’t injured, and praised her officers for keeping bystanders safe once they arrived.</p> <p>In addition to the injured officers and two killed, three bystanders were caught in the crossfire and struck before officers arrived, cops said, but none remained hospitalized by the next morning.</p> <p>After engaging police, the alleged shooter was seen on security footage collapsing onto the asphalt in a nearby parking lot. Phoenix police say they believe the man killed himself, but are awaiting an autopsy’s findings to officially determine his cause of death.</p> <p>Police recovered a rifle, several rifle magazines, incendiary devices, a gas mask, and a helmet from the scene. A motive for the gunman’s rampage was not released by Monday.</p> <p>“Kevlar helmet, tactical vest, high-powered rifle—this individual was set on doing damage to our community,” Williams said Monday.</p>
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